



# WOMEN IN THE UGANDA POLICE FORCE

## Barriers to women in operational policing

**RAOUL  
WALLENBERG  
INSTITUTE**  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW



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# Acronyms and abbreviations

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ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
AIGP	Assistant Inspector General of Police
AIP	Assistant Inspector of Police
APCOF	African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum
ASP	Assistant Superintendent
CIV	Crime intelligence volunteer
CJSI	Centre for Justice Studies and Innovations
CP	Commissioner of Police
CPL	Corporal
DIGP	Deputy Inspector General of Police
DPC	District Police Commander
EAC	East African Community
EAPCCO	East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
GBV	gender-based violence
GRP	gender-responsive policing
HC	Head Constable
HCM	Head Constable Major
HURINET	Human Rights Network
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IP	Inspector of Police
JLOS	Justice, Law and Order Sector
KMP	Kampala Metropolitan Police
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPA	National Planning Authority



NPTS	National Police Training School
OP	operational policing
PAC	Police Advisory Committee
PC	Police Constable
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PPC	Probation Police Constable
PSU	Professional Standards Unit
RPC	Regional Police Commander
RWI	Raoul Wallenberg Institute
SCP	Senior Commissioner of Police
SGT	Sergeant
SP	Superintendent of Police
SPC	Senior Police Constable
SSP	Senior Superintendent of Police
TOT	Training of Trainers
UACE	Ugandan Advanced Certificate of Education
UCE	Ugandan Certificate of Education
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPF	Uganda Police Force

# Executive Summary

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The Common Standards for Policing in East Africa ('Common Standards') were adopted in 2010 by the East African Community (EAC) and the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO). The Common Standards represent a crucial regional commitment to promoting democratic and rights-based policing across the East African region.

To understand the extent to which Uganda is meeting its commitments in terms of the Common Standards, the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) and the Human Rights Network (HURINET) Uganda conducted a baseline study to compare the legislative, regulatory and policy framework for policing against the Common Standards. One of the findings of the study was the under-representation of women within the ranks of the Uganda Police Force (UPF), notably in operational-policing roles. The UPF presently has a total staff strength of 43 717, of which 7 777 (18.3%) are women. This was of particular concern to the authors of the study and the UPF, as there have been significant efforts to establish and implement policies and strategies to improve the men-to-woman ratio within the UPF.

The development of the UPF Gender Strategy and Action Plan is meant to guide the implementation of the UPF Gender Policy during the period 2019 to 2023 so that the police force is more gender-responsive and effective. A study to understand why these measures are not working, and how to improve the ratio of men to women in operational policing, was therefore a key recommendation of the baseline study.

As the baseline study noted, women's active participation in policing is not just important in the broadest sense of promoting gender equality in the public service, but has a demonstrably positive impact on the way policing is undertaken. In countries where the number of men and women in the police service is similar, there tend to be 'better and more rights-based policing responses, including lower incidents of the use of force, and higher reporting of crime by victims of rape and sexual assault'. Accordingly, to achieve its vision of an 'accountable and modern police force', and to meet its commitments in terms of the Common Standards and other regional and international human rights norms, the UPF needs to understand and address the barriers to women's participation in operational policing as part of its broader reform agenda.

This study therefore aims to be the first step in that process by seeking to understand the barriers that women face when applying for, and fulfilling, operational-policing roles in

Uganda, and by making practical and evidence-based recommendations to the UPF in order to address these barriers.

The overall purpose of the inquiry is to understand the barriers to women applying for and joining the UPF in order to pave the way for more responsive institutional recruitment policies and practices as well as to encourage more women to be appointed to operational-policing positions.

The inquiry analyses barriers – both perceived and actual – encountered by women when applying to and joining the UPF and recommends strategies designed to enhance and empower women and the UPF in addressing the identified barriers.

The barriers faced by women when applying for and fulfilling roles in operational policing comprise a complex web of interconnected factors. Some of these factors are related specifically to the recruitment and deployment policies and practices within the UPF, whereas others constitute general challenges within Ugandan society as a whole that manifest in behaviours which undermine women's choices.

It is the interaction of historical policing traditions, societal norms and gender roles, together with institutional factors, values and incentives, that leads to fewer women applying for and fulfilling roles in operational policing. It is important to note that women in police are also not a homogenous group – some thrive against the odds, whereas others do not. Gender is a factor, but the forces of ethnicity, class, family and power are equally important. The UPF has formulated a very progressive Gender Policy that is aligned to the government of Uganda's Gender Policy. The UPF has also developed a Gender Strategy and Action Plan and undertaken a range of process improvements relating to recruitment process in support of this effort.

The study recommends greater engagement with the public in order to influence changes in social norms; investment in efforts to address institutional and structural factors that constrain women from applying for and fulfilling operational-policing roles; fast-tracking implementation of the UPF Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan as integrated into the UPF Strategy 2020/21–2024/25; developing gender leadership and technical capacity; and building coalitions of support and accountability with government, academic institutions and civil society.

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# Background

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The African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), in collaboration with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI), has been supporting the adoption and implementation of normative standards through the provision of technical support for a range of regional policing bodies. One aspect of this support has been the adoption of the Common Standards for Policing in East Africa ('Common Standards') which provide for, among others, 30% of operational policing positions to be filled by women officers. Yet, in 2020, the number of women applying to join the Uganda Police Force (UPF), and those participating in operational policing, fell below this minimum. The UPF has expended significant effort on formulating a very progressive Gender Policy aligned to the government of Uganda's Gender Policy. It has also developed a Gender Strategy and Action Plan and has implemented a range of process improvements relating to recruitment in support of this effort. This inquiry is intended to assist the UPF to better understand the remaining barriers faced by women applying for and fulfilling operational-policing roles in order to ensure that the responses are appropriate for ensuring attainment of the relevant standard.

## The assessment

The assessment was conducted by a four-person team from the Centre for Justice Studies and Innovations (see Appendix 1: About the CJSI) with a combined expertise in gender, policing, research, justice and institutional reforms, systems mapping, and Ugandan history and sociopolitical issues. Conducted over the course of 1.5 months, the inquiry had two objectives:

1. To design and undertake a study in order to understand the barriers to women applying for and joining the UPF; and
2. To identify how the recruitment policy and practice of the UPF can encourage more women to obtain operational-policing positions.

## Methodology

The team utilised a mixed-methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as primary and secondary data sources. The study relied on two classes of literature: namely UPF-generated literature, including policy, strategy and operational documents (a bibliography is to be found in Appendix 2); and relevant national and regional policy documents used to extract national and regional benchmarks as well as identify operational bottlenecks in comparative institutions and recommendations relating thereto.

A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with women police officers and 15 key-informant interviews with members of the UPF leadership, the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), the National Planning Authority (NPA), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) in order to explore how the recruitment policy and practice of the UPF influences women applying for positions in and joining the UPF, as well as to propose recommendations. All key-Informant Interviews and in-depth interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed using a single-stage transcription protocol. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data was reviewed by multiple readers, and themes were identified and coded. Codes were grouped into categories, and then themes and subthemes were further identified.

In addition, 265 surveys were conducted: 125 interviews with members of the police that were evenly spread between men and women, and 140 with community members in the recruitment age bracket that factored in gender and geographical location. Police officers were drawn from four policing regions of the Kampala Metropolitan Police (KMP): Katonga, Aswa, Rwizi and Kyoga. The team complied with the COVID- 9 Guidelines of the Ministry of Health Management and conducted phone interviews with a large number of upcountry respondents in accordance with the applicable ethical and health guidelines.

Data analysis was thematic and was complemented by methods described in Grounded Theory, including constant comparison and deviant case analysis. The management and cleaning processes included regular research-team meetings and debriefs after each set of discussions and interviews. The team used NVivo 10 analysis software (QSR International, 2012).

The team internally assured quality through training and supervision of research assistants, pre-testing and the translation of tools, and daily review meetings comprising data-collection teams. Debriefing meetings were held with data collectors on a daily basis in order to discuss issues emerging from the discussions and record any incidents or events that had occurred during data collection.

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THE TEAM  
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QUANTITATIVE  
METHODS

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## Profile of respondents

The East Kyoga Policing Region yielded the youngest group of respondents, with 46% being less than 25 years of age and split proportionately between married and single members (see Figure 1). The Katonga Policing Region, on the other hand, provided 67% of respondents older than 46, with 47% being married. More KMP respondents (67%) possessed a university degree compared with 11% from East Kyoga.

Figure 1: Age group of respondents (Source: Survey)

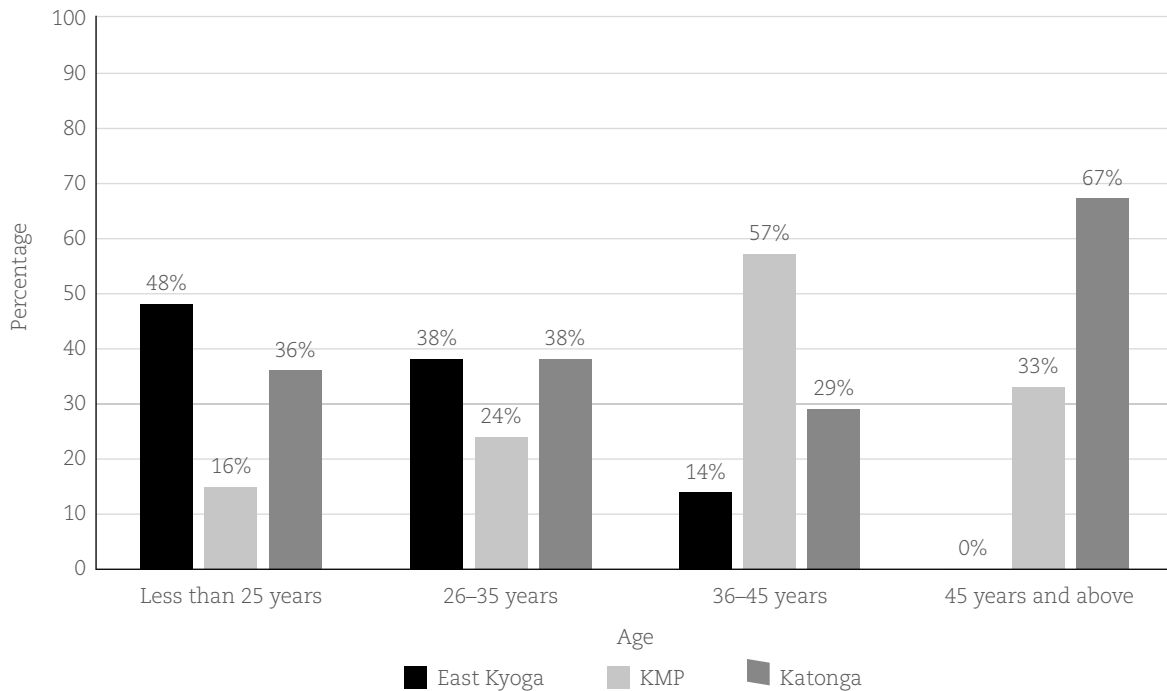
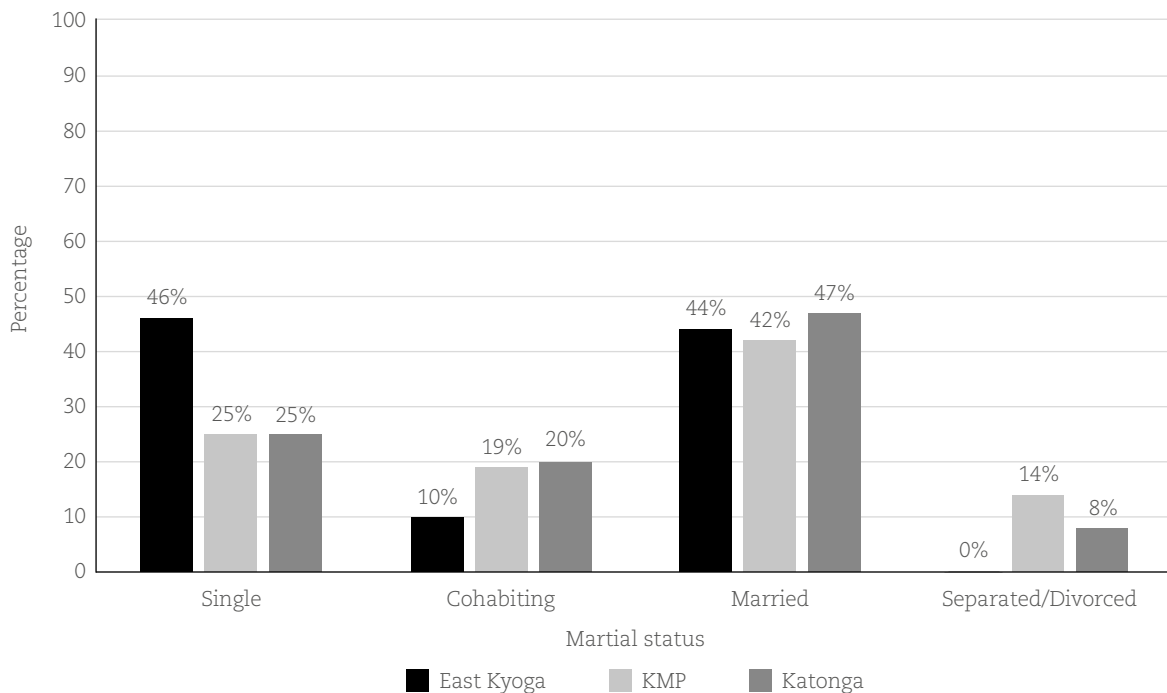


Figure 2: Marital status of respondents (Source: Survey)



## Education

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of formal education and provided the information presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Education level of respondents (Source: Survey)

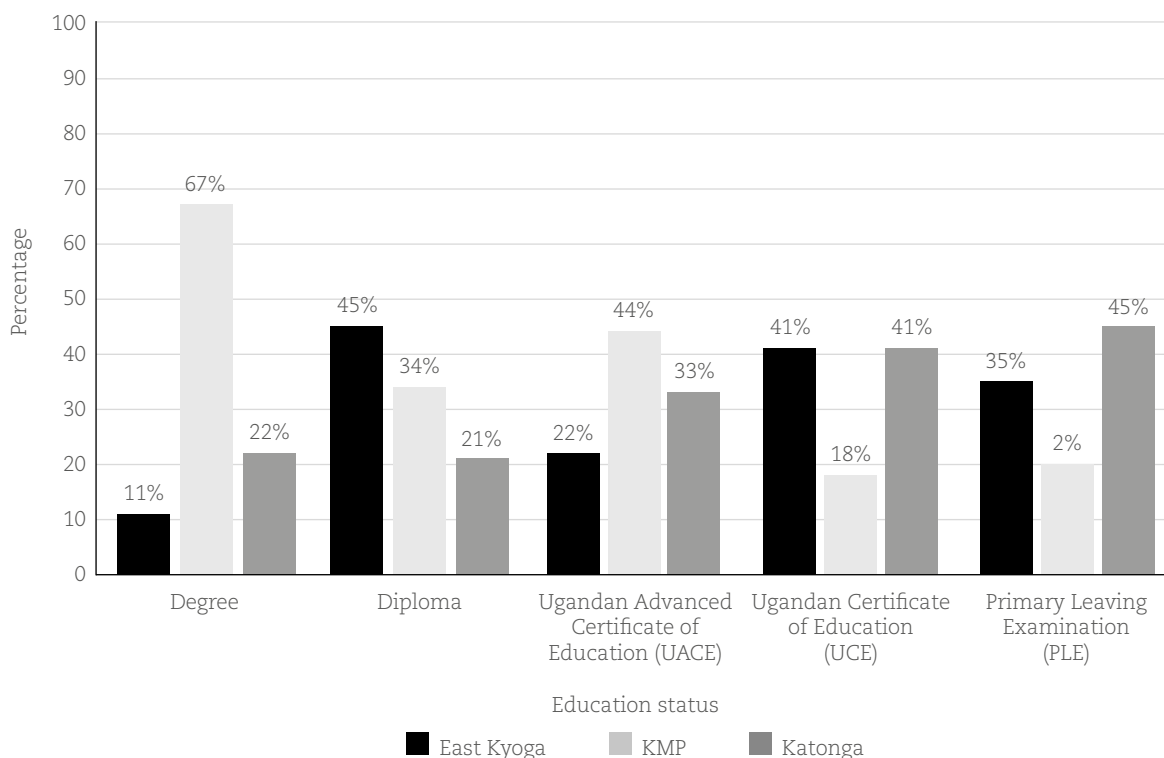
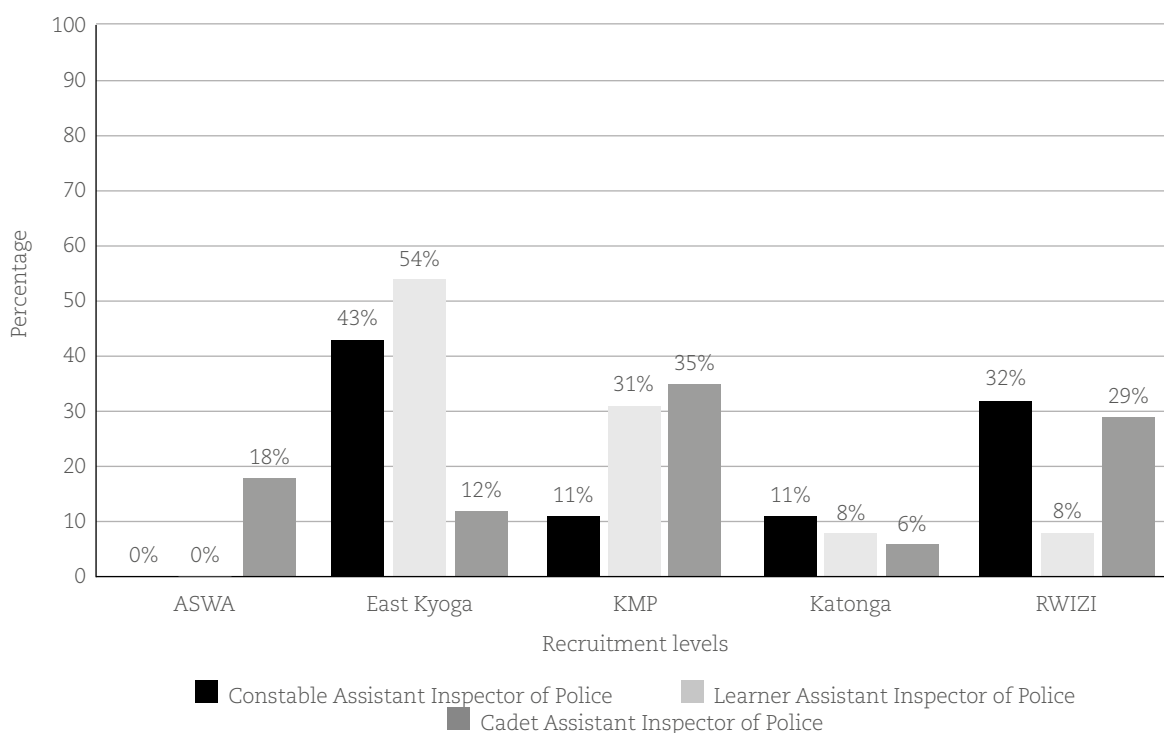


Figure 4: UPF recruitment levels by region (Source: UPF manpower audit)



The information in Figure 3 reveals that the majority of those interviewed in the KMP area (67%) indicated that they had obtained a degree, compared with only 22% and 11% in the Katonga and East Kyoga regions, respectively. In East Kyoga, 45% had acquired a tertiary

education, while 41% had obtained a UCE. These findings were important to the study, because they signified that all the respondents were literate and were therefore able to adequately respond to questions asked. As a result, the study was able to obtain rich, accurate and up-to-date information on focus areas of the study, namely barriers to women applying for, and participating in, operational policing.

According to the graph in Figure 4; the Katonga Policing Region comprising the Mpigi, Gomba and Butambala districts consistently has low numbers of male and female police recruits, that is, 11% constables, 8% learner AIPs and 6% cadets. On the other hand, the Kyoga Policing Region comprising the Soroti, Kumi and Ngora districts has the highest number of job applicants, namely 54% learner AIPs, 43% constables and 12% cadets (see Figure 4).

## Key limitations

The nature of the inquiry and its timing, that is, at the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown, meant that the team had to innovate and conduct virtual interviews using telephones and Zoom. The use of telephones, particularly those of the UPF's network of choice, Uganda Telecom Limited, was problematic. Calls were frequently dropped and the reach often unpredictable. To mitigate this, and with the assistance of the UPF Human Resource Department, the team liaised with the UPF's regional human resource officers, who provided alternative personal telephone numbers on better-performing networks.

As regards police research protocols, the procedure for obtaining UPF approval to conduct research requires permission of the UPF Director of Research and Planning as well as the Inspector General of Police. Scheduling and the holding of meetings were often subject to delays and various protocols, particularly since the commencement of the research coincided with the start of the national election campaigns.

Insofar as data availability was concerned, there was limited access to data within the UPF. In addition, some of the documents that would have been reviewed were not available for the team to access. This delayed the data-collection process and resulted in certain limitations during the analysis of the study findings.

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THE STUDY WAS  
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INFORMATION

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# Barriers to women applying for and fulfilling operational-policing roles in the Uganda Police Force

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## The system applicable

In order to understand the barriers faced by women in applying for, and participating in, operational-policing roles, it is important to explore what drives and enables the current situation. The team used system mapping to develop an initial representation of how the various factors within and external to the Uganda Police Force (UPF) interact to decrease the number of women applying for, and participating in, operational-policing roles. The advantages of a system map are that it allows for a holistic understanding of a shared problem among a diversity of actors. Furthermore, it is a sound platform for identifying interventions and actors across public–private and state–non-state divides that need to be coordinated in order to resolve a complex problem. Women applying for, and participating in, operational-policing roles fits the definition of a complex problem.

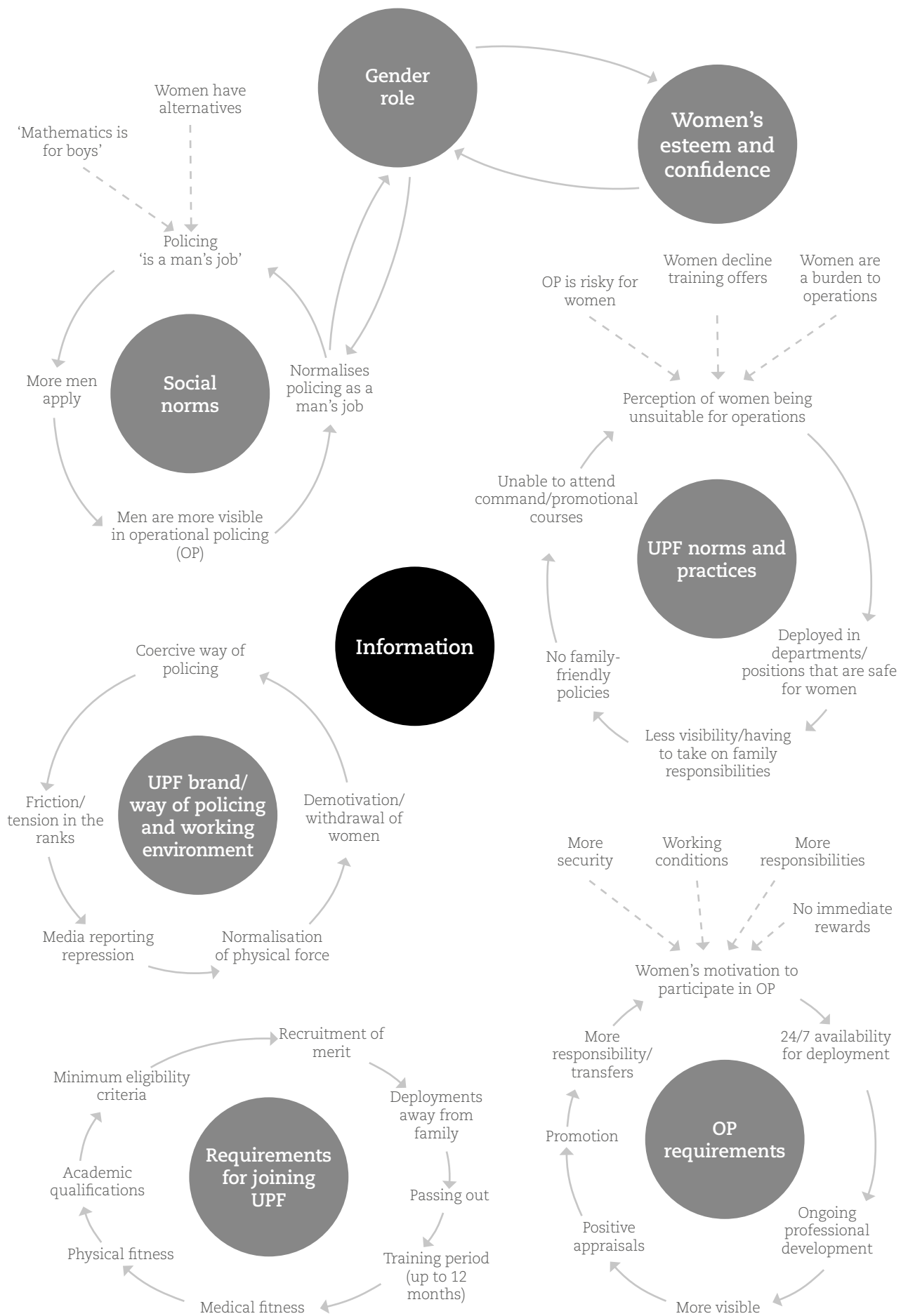
## System attributes

The relevant barriers for women extend beyond recruitment and operational policing to, among others, the UPF as an institution, the community as a protector of social norms, the national gender-equality movement, and the national education system.

## System map underpinning the relevant barriers for women with regard to operational policing

Norms that constrain the participation of women in policing will reinforce the belief that policing is ‘a man’s job’, thus leading to more men than women joining the UPF. More men in the UPF will lead to a vicious cycle of greater use of coercive force, the negation of women’s contribution in policing operations, and reinforcement of the societal norm that policing is the preserve of men. Similarly, fewer women joining the UPF will mean less women in visible operational policing – and, if women see no positive deviations from the societal norm, less women will be motivated to join the police.

Figure 5: System map: barriers to women (Source: Internally generated data)



# Other barriers to women applying for, and participating in, operational-policing roles

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## Societal barriers

Social norms, particularly those that define policing as being a masculine pursuit, give rise to certain expectations in respect of women in terms of work and community life. These, coupled with community perceptions pertaining to the Uganda Police Force (UPF), are identified as key barriers to women's participation in policing:

### *Societal norms – perceptions of policing as masculine work*

Social norms can be viewed as mutual expectations about what is typical and appropriate behaviour within a group of people. Social norms may facilitate or constrain behaviour. For instance, East Kyoga is one of the police regions that tends to have the highest number of women recruits.<sup>1</sup> It is also a region characterised by facilitative social norms for women. Statistics and survey findings show that East Kyogan society now finds it acceptable and prestigious for girls to apply for and join the UPF. Communities not only take pride in associating with and being part of the UPF, but also recognise the UPF as one of the top employers offering employment opportunities for young women in such communities. Young men and women are also able to identify with role models in the police. These role models have unlocked the potential and desire of young women to participate successfully in the UPF. Moreover, families support those young people who wish to join the UPF. The growing interest shown by community members in joining the police force is evident, among others, from their desire to receive timely responses and feedback after completion of the application process. Payments to brokers to 'navigate the application process or jump the queue' are common as community members avail themselves of all possible avenues to join the UPF.

Katonga, in contrast, is one of the police regions with the least number of recruits – during the 2020 UPF recruitment drive, there were only 10 applicants. In this region, constraining social norms affect the way women and girls think about applying to, and being employed by, the UPF. Policing is perceived to be a man's job requiring physical strength that is performed in working conditions where only the male gender can thrive. This perception is

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1 During the 2020 recruitment drive, the UPF received 353 applications from Kyoga.

reinforced by the coercive policing approach visible in the operations of the UPF, thereby signalling to women that one has to be 'tough' and 'masculine' in order to be an effective police officer. Stereotyping policing as a man's job shapes society's expectations as to who is better suited for such work and biases women choices when it comes to applying for and joining the UPF. For instance, it influences a woman's chances to apply for a job, whether she will be hired, the pay she will receive, and even performance evaluations that determine promotion.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, then:

*Society views policing as a male job. Parents do not want their children to join the police, and they think that their daughter will become a man and will furthermore be uncontrollable because she is informed about legal matters. [Edited response of interviewee]*

### **Expectations of women in terms of family and community life**

In Ugandan society, patriarchy still defines social relationships between men and women, girls and boys. Norms driven by patriarchy determine appropriate behaviour or the roles of men in relation to women. Thus: 'Girls are expected to take "feminine" jobs that allow them to effectively fulfil their reproductive roles.:'; 'Girls are not expected to use force or coerce action from others.:'; 'Girls are expected to be beautiful and in that way attract good suitors.:'; 'Only unattractive women join the police.:'; 'Girls who join the police are likely not to get married.:' and 'Girls are nurturers who are groomed to look after their families.:' Similarly, the power relations between women and men stifle women's choices, especially with statements such as: 'Not many men would want to marry a police officer.:' It is these stereotypes that shape the way in which individuals interact with one another.

A combination of societal expectations and the division of labour along gender lines conditions women between the ages of 18 and 23 to have priorities that rank higher than joining the police. Many find it difficult to free themselves from the expectations discussed and to take up careers that are perceived to require 'working long hours' and 'deployment away from home'. The idea of visualising women's work as being at home as daughters, mothers and wives is the mainstay of patriarchal ideologies and policies. Women internalise this idea and view such 'work' as enabling them to claim rights, dignity, recognition and social influence. In this way, they reinforce the belief that their gender roles are incompatible with policing.

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IN UGANDAN  
SOCIETY,  
PATRIARCHY STILL  
DEFINES SOCIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN MEN  
AND WOMEN,  
GIRLS AND BOYS

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2 Sarah Thebaud & Laura Doering (2017), How a job acquires a gender (and less authority if it's female). Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-a-job-acquires-a-gender-and-less-authority-if-its-female-79164>.

## ***Community perception of the UPF as an unfriendly workplace for women***

The majority of women who joined the police did so as a last option for eking out a living. Images of squalid living conditions acted as filters in guiding these women to reject options not involving employment in the UPF. However, it is difficult to attract and retain women when working conditions are poor, the pay is inadequate, and there is a big deficit in public trust. Of the respondents based at the Kampala Metropolitan Police (KMP), 12% singled out economic reasons, particularly the poor pay, as the most significant barrier for women, along with institutional practices and norms and corruption at 9%. The negative reputation of the police follows at 7%. The UPF has consistently been indentified as one of the top three most corrupt institutions,<sup>3</sup> and an organisation engaged in torture and brutality against journalists,<sup>4</sup> among others. All of this is exacerbated by the prevalent mental model that 'policing is best suited for men and is hard'. As a consequence, many women opt to join professions other than the UPF, which continues to negatively affect the number of women recruits in the UPF.

All in all, the external factors that influence women's participation are significant in determining the number of women recruited by the UPF. These factors influence women's decisions to seek employment opportunities in the UPF. The majority of female respondents, having overcome the various barriers to joining the UPF, are then faced with more barriers within the institution itself, as discussed below.

## **Institutional Ugandan Police Force barriers**

Social norms interact with and reinforce institutional norms. From the time of its establishment up to the present day, the UPF has been a male-dominated institution. All operational systems and approaches bear the 'stamp of the male gender'. The UPF recruitment and deployment systems are 'developed with a man in mind'. Transformation towards an all-gender, responsive institution is in its formative stages and is yet to permeate through to formal and informal police culture. The latter is important, as many practices are learnt and perpetuated through socialisation, as well as through execution as one works alongside senior police officers and consults with superiors and experienced colleagues. Institutional barriers are further examined in detail below across the recruitment and operational-policing processes.

### ***Recruitment process and practice***

Recruitment is a human resource function that starts with planning and budgeting. The planning phase involves identifying human resource gaps, noting the number of vacancies and policing areas where gaps exist, identifying the best channels for communicating with the prospective pool of applicants, and deciding how best to manage the selection process. It further involves forming teams, as well as advertising using print media (and, more recently, social media), radio, and Regional and District Police Commanders (RPCs/DPCs) to convey information within their areas of operation. Recruitment teams are constituted, briefed, equipped with recruitment kits, and dispatched to the regions.

In the team briefings, the Inspector General of Police, or his/her representatives, emphasises the requirement of meeting the 30% quota in respect of women as well as the need to support women applicants. Since 2010, new procedures have been introduced in terms of which recruitment teams interface with applicants in the field. A recruitment team is drawn

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<sup>3</sup> Inspectorate of Government (2019), Annual report to Parliament, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Uganda Human Rights Commission (2018), 21st annual report, 87.

from the higher echelons of the UPF and is supported by selected functional specialists. Teams submit reports to Human Resources after each recruitment exercise. These reports are submitted to the Police Advisory Committee (PAC), which decides when to invite the successful candidates for training. The PAC comprises 24 members (23 male and one female). Previously, successful candidates, especially cadets, would be notified through the print media. Currently, however, the UPF makes use of community radio or has RPCs place the lists of selected candidates on regional and district police noticeboards.

UPF recruitment teams pay attention to and proactively pursue the attainment of geographical- representation quotas.<sup>5</sup> The gender requirement, it is submitted, should also be pursued with similar purposiveness. There is a need for police management: to emphasise that not meeting the recruitment quota in order to remedy the disproportionate representation of women in the UPF is unacceptable; and to deliberately and purposively monitor and evaluate the strategies used after every recruitment drive. A long-term recruitment plan that is adequately resourced will best serve the UPF in this drive. This could, if considered necessary, also cater for special recruitment drives relating to women in order to address imbalances over a set period of time.

### ***Barriers to application***

#### *Access to information calling for applications/ease of application*

In the eastern region, one of the regions with the highest number of recruits, those who received information early calling for applications were more likely to apply. Most women (over 80% in all sampled regions) reported receiving information calling for applications. This is a commendable effort by the UPF. The majority of Probation Police Constables (PPCs) (58.6%) were aware of the call for applications/advertisement. Moreover, applicants became aware of the invitation for applications through television (66%), newspaper advertisements (64%), friends and relatives already in the UPF (60%), and radio advertisements (55%). The rest accessed the information via the Internet and social media. Community members from Katonga also noted that it was extremely easy to apply.

However, besides the call for applications, there is limited information available, for instance information relating to admission criteria, training requirements, entitlements in the course of training, benefits associated with joining, and the different levels to which all these apply. Details of the training, including information on medical examinations and the scope of training are mostly unknown to trainees. In addition, there are many misconceptions regarding police training and its effects on women. The majority of trainees do not know how important certain sections of their training is to prospective work in the police, why they need to perform drills, or even why they have to shave their heads.

Efforts designed to create targeted awareness may alleviate this problem, particularly if they feature women and include information on: (a) the recruitment process, and on benefits and opportunities for women; (b) the training process and the details of the training programme at Kabalye National Police Training School (NPTS); and (c) the deployment process.

#### *Requirements for joining the UPF*

Minimum eligibility criteria are: the prescribed academic qualifications; readiness to undertake a 12-month Police Basic Training Course; physical fitness; readiness to work for long hours and, at times, under difficult conditions; readiness to work in any part of the country; and possession of good communication skills.

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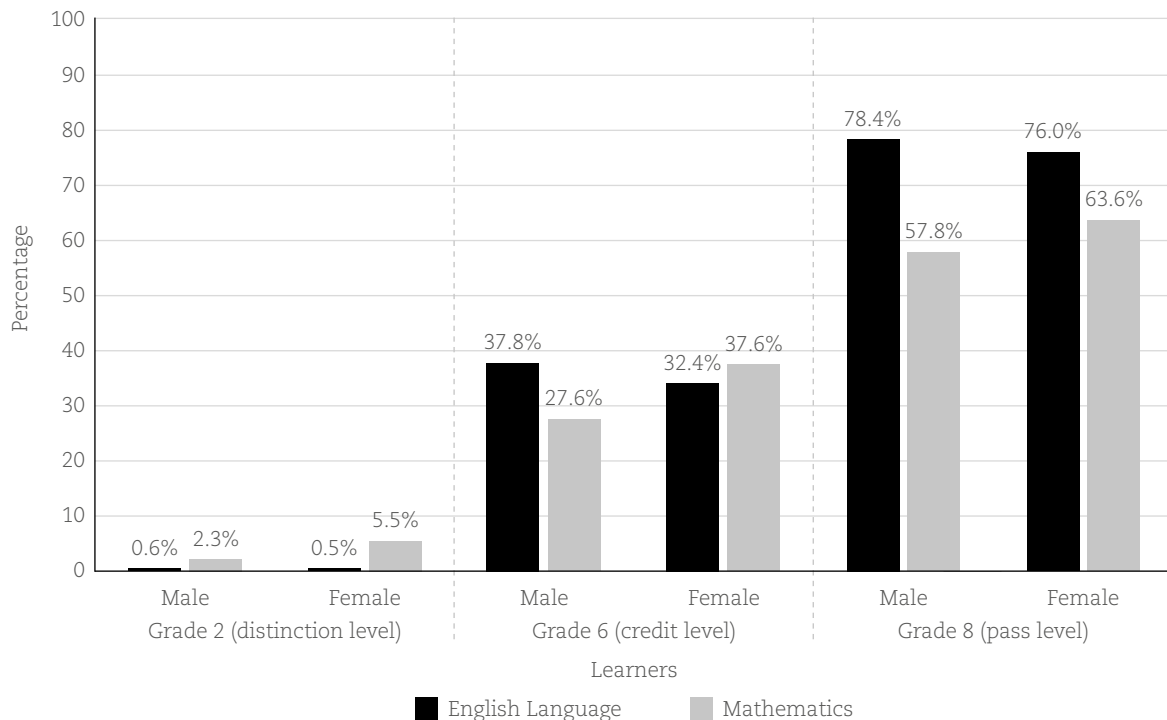
5 This is to ensure a geographically representative UPF as required by the Constitution of Uganda and provisions of the Police Act.

### Academic qualifications

As part of efforts to implement the Gender Policy and to meet the minimum standards, the UPF increased the age requirement for PPCs by three years from 18 to 22 to 18 to 25 years and for Learner Assistant Inspectors of Police (AIPs) from 20 to 25 to 20 to 28 years in order to expand the pool of potential applicants. Learner AIPs must have a minimum of a diploma, whereas PPCs must have a minimum of a Ugandan Certificate of Education (UCE) with at least five credits, with one credit being either in English or mathematics. During the ongoing recruitment of PPCs in 2020, further adjustments were made in order that female applicants with four credits and a pass in mathematics could be considered. In making the academic entry-level requirements for women more flexible during the selection process, the number of women, particularly at PPC entry level, has increased. Although the number of females has increased, it remains disproportionate to the increase in men at the entry level.

*When we don't get enough women, we relax those qualifications... . The teams are advised to go out of their way to relax the requirements so as to bring in women... , but it is a target and, if we fail to meet it, we will do it next time, although this has downstream implications for women in the ranks. [Edited response of interviewee]*

Figure 6: Comparison of male and female UCE candidate performance by subject, 2019  
(Source: Government of Uganda, Ministry of Education and Sports)



The Ugandan Certificate of Education (UCE) grades for 2019 indicate girls and boys performing almost on a par in Mathematics and English, with 63.6% of boys obtaining a pass compared with 57.6% of girls. That said, a requirement of four credits and a pass in Mathematics bars many women at the point of entry. Moreover, girls with this level of achievement are most likely to pursue advanced education and/or vocational training. There is also gender-based educational disparity across the regions. Retaining the relevant criteria excludes many women with potential in regions where educational attainment by girls at UCE level is low. There have been a number of voices calling for the review of the academic requirements regarding English and Mathematics and for drawing on the practices of the Uganda Prisons Service and the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces. The Uganda Prisons Service, for instance, is not specific in respect of the credit requirement.

### **Applicant-testing process**

The Human Resource Directorate<sup>6</sup> selects the successful candidates based on recruitment requirements as well as applicant performance with regard to various aspects. Successful candidates undergo further assessments, including physical-fitness drills and medical examinations for HIV, pregnancy and hepatitis B. Those who are successful, undertake aptitude tests and participate in oral interviews. Each test results in a weighted score. The minimum score/pass mark for recruitment is not uniform across recruitment centres but varies according to the district quota, performance at the recruitment centre, and, sometimes, gender considerations.<sup>7</sup> Without access to data on selection and testing outcomes, it was difficult to assess whether or not the testing processes supported or constrained women joining the UPF. What is clear is that women are screened out at every stage of the process, as noted by a respondent at the national level.

*Just in the last intake in 2019/2020, we ... disqualified about 12 out of 14 girls for being pregnant, so, even with the small numbers that we have, we still have to encroach on these by disqualifying them. [Edited response of interviewee]*

Pregnancy and the way it is dealt with by the UPF places a burden on women, often increasing dropout rates on entry, in the course of training and during deployment. Furthermore, it often constrains women from attending promotional courses. These constraints pertaining to pregnancy need to be addressed proactively by the UPF so that female recruits are attracted and retained.

It is equally clear that the time lag between the conclusion of the selection process and the invitation to attend training may be disadvantaging women. Many respondents pointed to the delays between interviews and actually joining the UPF as a factor affecting women's participation, that is, they do not know when they will be called back and consequently often use this time to explore other available options.

Furthermore, it was not confirmed whether the selection process only measures skills and abilities at the minimum level actually necessary to be able to police successfully. There were questions raised regarding, particularly, the physical-fitness requirement in relation to job performance. The arguments for reviewing this aspect pointed to the fact that not many effective serving officers in the operational sphere would meet the agility and physical requirements of the academy, thus giving rise to the question whether the standard set for new recruits is actually required for effective job performance. A review in this regard may therefore well be necessary, as well as a continuous search for alternatives that promote effective operational policing and do not disadvantage women.

### **Readiness to work for long hours and, at times, under difficult conditions**

Of note is that those deployed in operational policing must be available to work whenever they are called on to do so. This is a constraint for female officers who are married and have children.

### **Readiness to work in any part of the country**

This mainly affects those with family obligations, for frequent transfers uproot not only the officer but also the family and remove them from a social-support network that they are used to. The majority of officers identified for transfers contest such transfers and opt to stay where they are safe with their families.

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6 The Directorate is supported by a Chairperson, Secretary, RPC, Regional Human Resource Officer, a Professional Standards Unit (PSU) and medical personnel who carry out field visits to the regions to participate in the recruitment exercise.

7 Interview with respondent, Kampala, 11 December 2020.



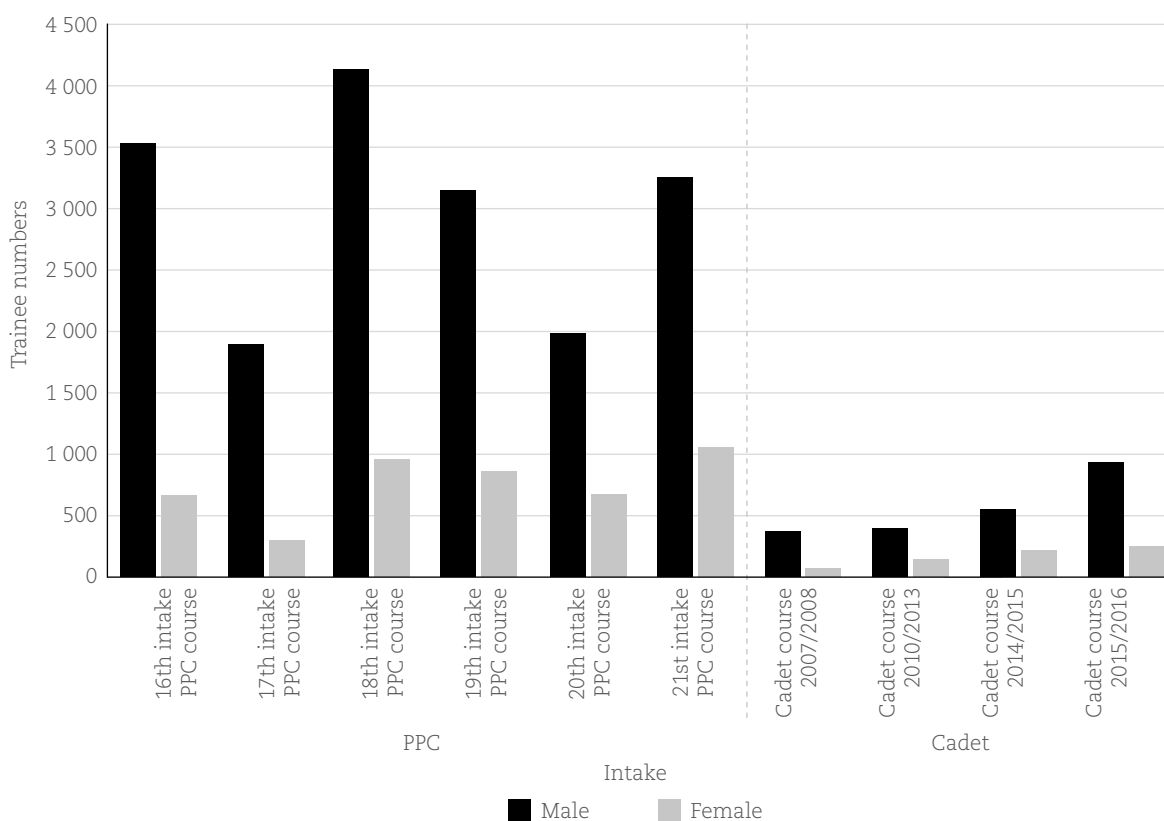
### Other areas where women have a comparative advantage but are not covered by the Minimum Eligibility Requirements

The UPF has adopted community policing as the preferred way of policing,<sup>8</sup> but the transition to such policing is a work in progress. In practice, community policing coexists with the use of coercive force to overcome resistance and obtain compliance with orders. This is particularly the case with regard to public-order policing. Community Policing causes the police to be popular with the community.<sup>9</sup> The values and skills that underpin community policing, for instance mediation, problem-solving, organising, de-escalating violence, and mobilising communities, are also areas where women have a comparative advantage. These values and skills, save for communication skills, are yet to feature in the UPF’s Minimum Eligibility Requirements. Women are likely to identify more with such requirements.

### Barriers to undertaking a 12-month pre-entry training course [C-head]

In addition to academic requirements, the minimum eligibility criteria also require readiness to undertake a twelve (12) months Police Basic Training Course.

Figure 7: PPC and cadet entry-level trainee numbers at Kabalye National Police Training School disaggregated by gender (Source: UPF Kabalye National Police Training School)



The training is perceived by the public and police officers as tough, tedious and strenuous, particularly the first three months of military drills and training. The majority of the participants noted that they got to a breaking point and wished to drop out but were precluded from doing so by the location of the training school, which is located deep in an isolated community where transport is limited. A question featuring consistently throughout

8 Community policing emphasises working collaboratively with the community to prevent/solve crime. This philosophy underpins the UPF’s vision of a professional and people-centred police force aimed at achieving a safe and secure society.  
 9 Uganda Police Force, Strategic plan 2012–2016.

the study is the relevance of the 12 months of training for those joining the police in order to perform specialist functions.

Women further pointed to disincentives related to the training environment, namely the lack of sanitation and medical facilities, the use by male trainers of gender-insensitive language to undermine the dignity of a woman, and sexual harassment of trainees by trainers.

Respondents also noted that the training is predominantly male-led, thus providing very limited opportunities for women to voice their concerns.

### ***Barriers faced by women who wish to take up operational policing roles***

Operational policing (OP) refers to 'police in the field, visible out there, working with the people in order to deal with problems of crime and disorder in society'. OP is commonly contrasted with support services, for instance community policing, logistics and engineering, human resources, intelligence, medical assistance, etc., that enable those in operations to do their work. 'People in operations are those to whom you say: "There is a riot here, a traffic jam, people to be arrested, investigations to be conducted, etc., – go and sort it out."'

OP is perceived to be the heart of the institution and provides the UPF with visibility. OP officers are visible in the community, working with people in order to deal with crime and disorder. OP is paramount and the UPF cannot afford anything to go wrong. All resources are used to scrutinise the OP team and to ensure that the UPF has the best team conducting OP. Operations are of a high-risk nature and officers are expected to be on duty whenever the need arises.

#### *Gender bias against deploying women in operational roles*

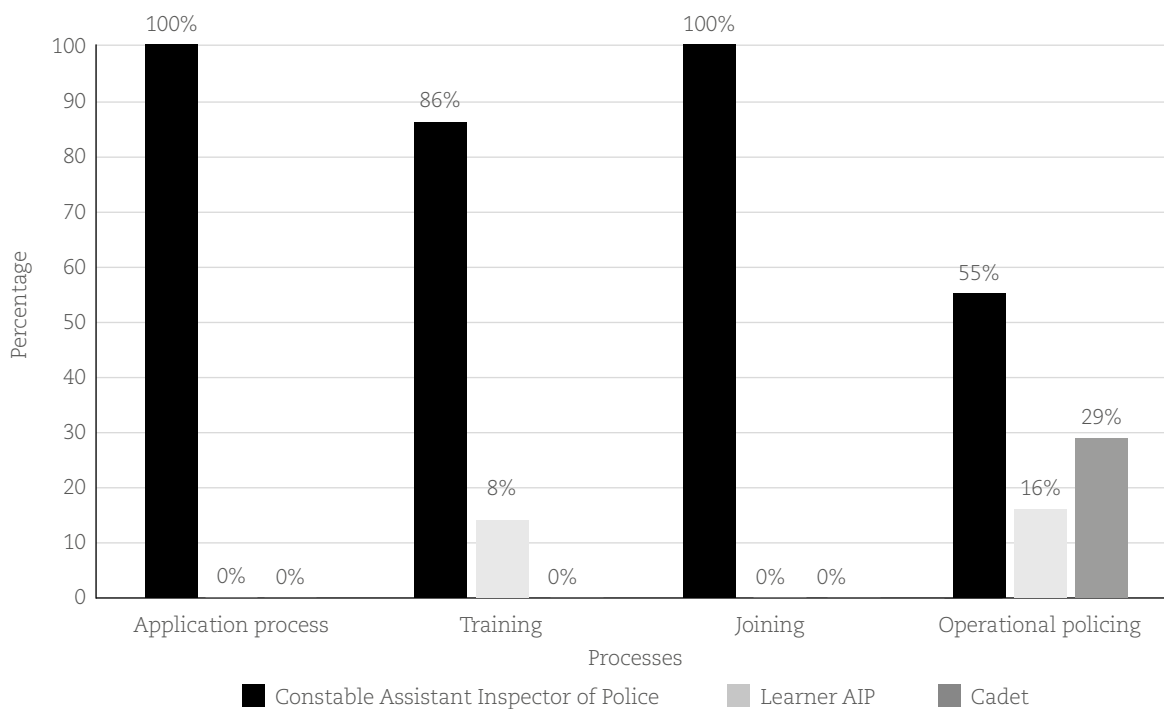
Although the UPF Human Resource and Gender Policies stipulate that deployment is to be based on merit, institutional norms and practices inform decisions regarding deployment in OP. The UPF modus operandi prioritises operations over everything else and tacitly drives the deployment and participation of men in OP. This is because, owing to gender division of labour and related factors, men are more likely to always be available for deployment, are believed to perform to the best of their ability, and are seen as performing more effectively and efficiently in combating crime and commanding fellow police officers to carry out their duties. In some instances, respondents reported that officers responsible for deploying personnel view women as a burden and limit their inclusion in highly visible and 'risky' operations.

#### *Operational working conditions are not favourable to women*

The reality of OP in the UPF is that, owing to inadequate staffing, officers who are deployed 'work longer hours, must be available at all hours for deployment, and have a track record of fearless execution of orders/ability to command'. A few women – referred to by male colleagues as 'rebels' – have exhibited these qualities and have participated in active operations. The majority of women, however, noted that this rigorous, hard work does not lead to any additional financial benefits in terms of increased pay or allowances.

Nevertheless, a few women indicated that it does provide them with an opportunity to be visible within the force, which results in other opportunities, especially promotion. The majority of constables (55%) proposed changes in the conduct of OP; in the case of cadets and learner AIPs, the percentages concerned were 29% and 16%, respectively. Most of the women at the different recruitment levels noted that changes were needed within OP, since they currently face challenges such as poor working conditions, delays in releasing operational funds, and a lack of incentives to support women when they are away from home for a lengthy period. Men, on the other hand, appeared to be content with the working environment relating to OP.

Figure 8: Making changes to UPF processes – respondents’ recommendations (Source: Survey)



*Women’s preference for non-operational policing work*

For many serving women, particularly those below the rank of ASP ( ), OP leadership as DPCs or RPCs gives rise to considerable pressure when starting a family or entering into a marital relationship, for institutional support and rewards are inadequate and there is ‘more visibility, more accountability and limited tolerance of failure’. As a consequence, many women choose not to make ‘life hard for themselves’ and are comfortable with positions without such political sensitivities that have limited visibility. This diminishes the pool of potentially highly qualified women leaders in policing. With limited incentives or initiative to excel, there is little emphasis on seeking out information on or opportunities for professional development.

Also, as a result of limited incentives or initiative to change existing practice, the notion that OP, particularly counterterrorism work and public-order management, is ‘not fit for women’ has been normalised. This has reinforced other factors and further reduced the number of women participating. As less women participate in highly visible operations,<sup>10</sup> the view that women cannot thrive in the UPF, not to mention effectively participate in OP, is equally reinforced. The societal norms and community perceptions in respect of policing continuously cause young women to choose other available job opportunities.

*Limited Information available to women that is related to opportunities in operational policing*

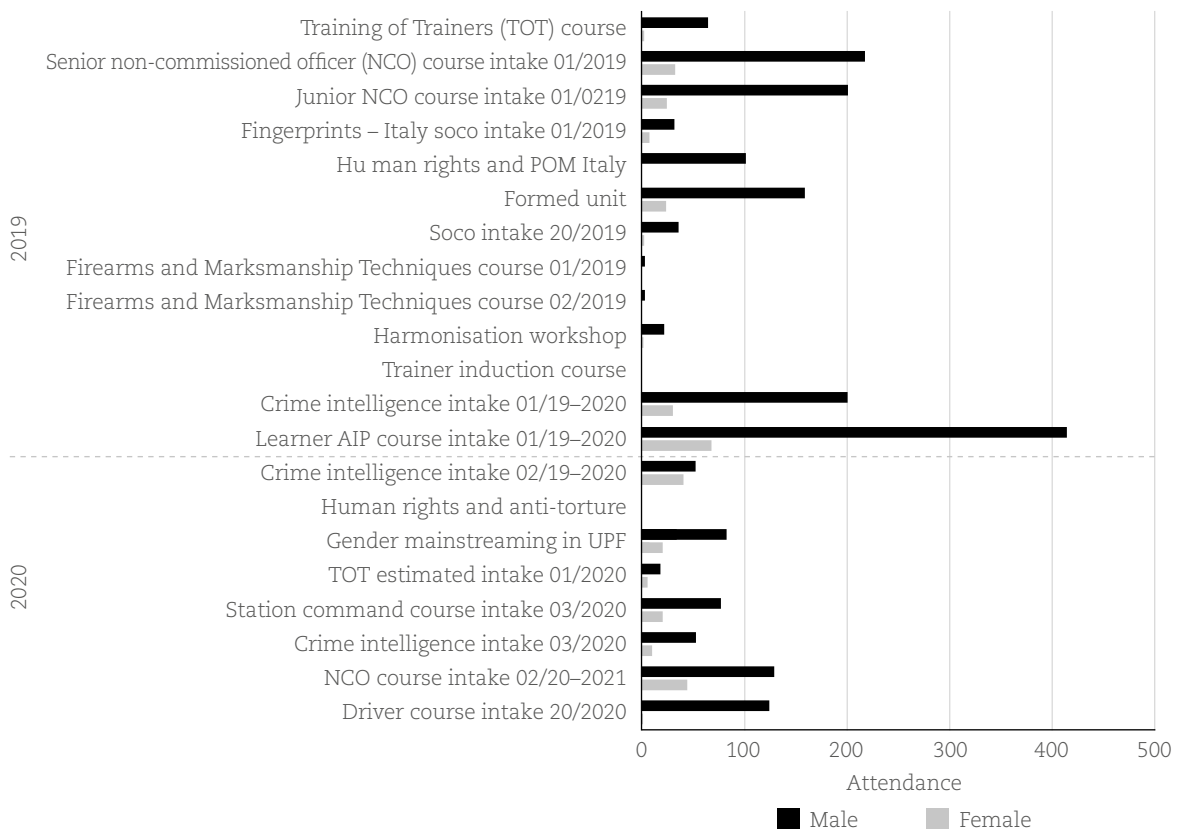
Cutting across all of the above dynamics is the lack of information available to women informing them of the value of policing, the contributions they can make to policing, their career-growth prospects in the UPF, and the opportunities open to them in the policing sphere. Progressive policy documents, as well as strategic and tactical plans, are available and are known to the higher echelons of the police, but are the least available to those that most need them. Many related behaviours, including suspicions that neither promotions nor selection for training are based on merit, are entrenched through a lack of user-friendly and accessible information.

<sup>10</sup> Presently, more women are working in, among others, the Family and Child Protection Units, the Department of Gender and Women Affairs and in the Command Centre.

## Barriers to promotion

The UPF Gender Strategy and Action Plan seek to increase the number and capacity of female officers in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels. Institutional processes base promotions on effective performance as well as attendance of command courses. However, most women are unable to attend promotional courses consistently without institutional support and consideration of their gender roles (see Figure 9 for the level of attendance by women of short courses organised by the NPTS).

Figure 9: Short-course attendance in 2019–2020 by PPCs at the Kabalye National Police Training School, disaggregated by gender (Source: UPF Kabalye National Police Training School)



In addition, appointments to operational positions of those who are ‘available to work longer hours’ and ‘have a track record’ create a continuous cycle of gendered privileges for men. Those who are available to work are also more likely to be available to attend promotional training; and those that are routinely available for deployment are more likely to be recommended by supervisors for promotion. The effect is that men, unencumbered by family responsibilities and privileged by existing institutional practices, are more likely to rise to the challenges than women. Whereas these processes may appear to be gender-neutral, they are blind to structural inequities as well as to the realities of women involved in a policing career as mothers and wives straddling. Unable to attend promotional training consistently, not being promoted, and often without adequate information as to what will happen next create a climate of resignation and frustration. This, in turn, generates tension within the ranks and between gender, thereby further hindering proactivism and performance on the part of women. This is more evident among those who join as constables and less so among those recruited as learner AIPs.

## Workplace culture as a silent barrier – sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can be viewed as a silent barrier. The majority talk about it but often underplay its intensity and are unwilling to provide detailed information. Being a male

dominated institution with a majority of male supervisors and decision-makers, there are gaps within the UPF system that provide opportunities for sexual harassment. Of note is the fact that appraisals for purposes of promotion rely mainly on feedback or reports from immediate supervisors, which leads to power imbalances between supervisors and subordinates. Officers in the lower ranks believe that sexual favours are routine and one of the ways to secure promotions or 'favourable placements'. Many female police officers at the PPC level have reported witnessing or experiencing sexual offences committed against female officers by their male counterparts.

### **Ugandan Police Force pay, infrastructure and working conditions as barriers for women**

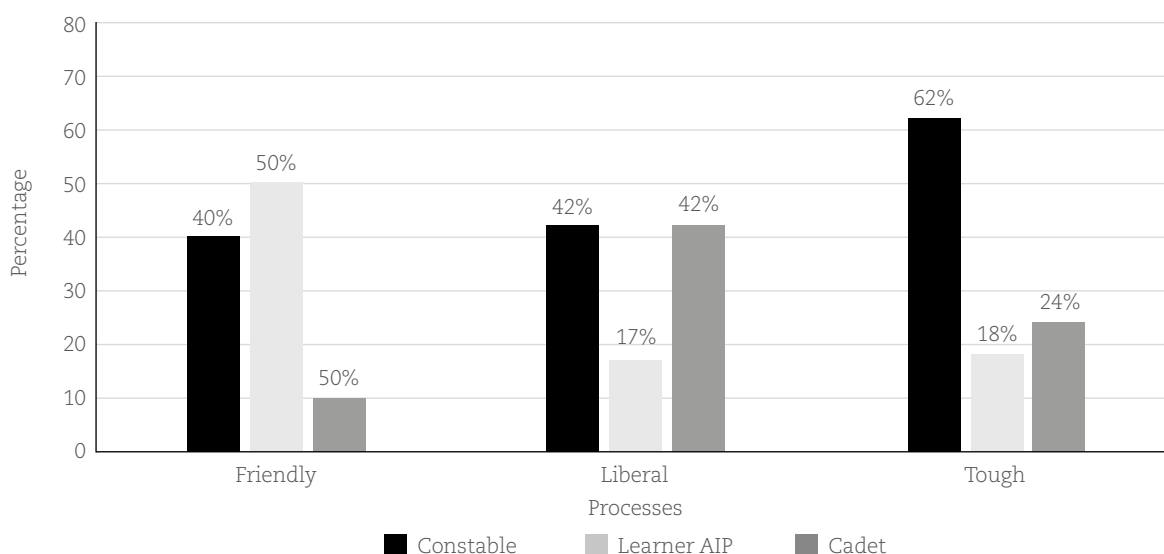
A large part of the UPF estate – both accommodation and administrative buildings – is in a state of disrepair and requires refurbishment. Poor and dilapidated housing structures at various stations, and no institution-owned accommodation facilities at other stations, results in the renting of houses by police officers, which is a strong disincentive for women.

The properties built in the 1950s were, at the time, more substantial and acceptable. They consisted of two-bedroom apartments for married officers and rooms for single officers. Today, these residential units are in a state of disrepair and sanitation facilities are unsatisfactory. In some instances, single-family units are now occupied by more than one family. Makeshift buildings have been erected to house police officers and their families. These buildings are single-room galvanised metal rondavels which, during the daytime, are extremely hot and, at night, extremely cold. Moreover, they lack adequate sanitation.

The highest percentage of personnel (34.6%) reported that working conditions were very 'tough', with 62% of these being constables and the rest (24%) being cadets. This was attributed, among other things, to bad working conditions, poor officer welfare, poor housing and accommodation, unfair and delayed promotions, and untimely and abnormal transfers in the UPF. A further percentage of officers (33.7%) considered the working conditions to be 'liberal' (with 42% of these being constables and 42% cadets), with the remainder regarding them as 'friendly'.

The findings revealed that 69% of women regarded working conditions to be the worst aspect of working in the UPF, for instance poor housing and accommodation, poor sanitation, and discrimination relating to promotions. Other areas regarded as problematic related to economic reasons (20%), including low salaries and low allowances for officers, and welfare issues (10%). The other area of concern was sexual harassment.

Figure 10: Working conditions of women in the UPF (Source: Survey)



## Uganda Police Force response: Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan

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The Uganda Police Force (UPF) is cognisant of certain of the barriers facing women who apply for and join the UPF, and who thereafter participate in operational policing (OP). Accordingly, it continues to devise strategies to address these issues. The UPF formulated a Gender Policy in December 2017, accompanied, in the following year, by a three-year Gender Strategy and Action Plan. The proposed outcomes and interventions were aligned with the Gender Policy and were drawn from consultations with key justice stakeholders and from best practice in other jurisdictions.

Through the Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan, the UPF aims to address its internal policies, procedures and structures to ensure that all of these are gender-responsive and promote a culture that is: respectful of women's rights; addresses inadequacies and weaknesses relating to the working conditions of its officers in order to stimulate increased interest on the part of female officers, and their recruitment and retention; addresses the insufficient representation of women in leadership positions; deals with the capacity gaps in gender-responsive policing; and considers the need to strengthen the institutional response to the management of issues pertaining to gender-based violence (GBV).

By the end of the financial year in June 2021, the UPF will have: reviewed, developed and implemented gender-responsive policies, structures, systems and procedures; reviewed and remodelled its training programmes and approaches; set up facilities to ensure gender sensitivity and responsiveness; made available adequate resourcing for the units responsible for gender-responsive policing, and child and family protection, and the criminal investigation of GBV-related cases; increased the number and visibility of female officers in the UPF; increased the number and capacity of female officers in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels; enhanced the capacity of all police officers with regard to gender-responsive policing; and improved services to achieve more effective prevention of, and responses to, GBV.

## Potential for addressing the key barriers to women participating in operational policing

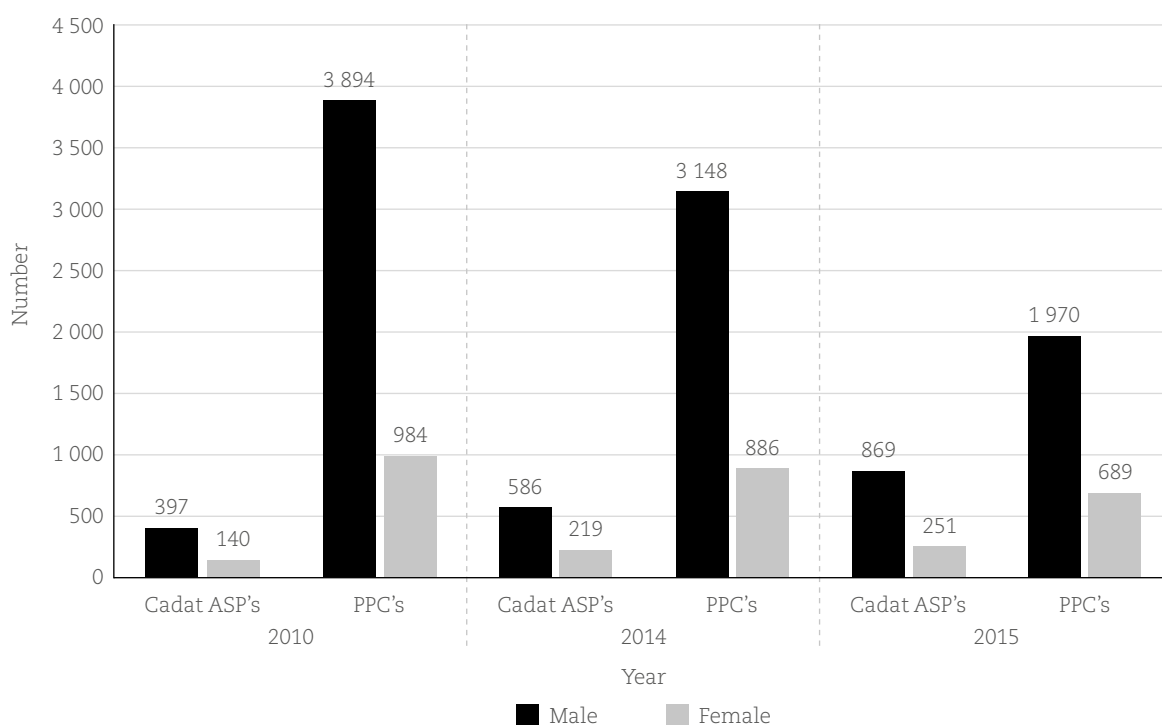
The content of the Policy, Strategy and resultant Action Plan is excellent, progressive and, when fully implemented, will address almost all internal barriers to participation by women. As illustrated below, the Policy, among other things, addresses obstacles for women relating to recruitment, deployment, promotion, leadership and decision-making, interactions within the UPF, sexual harassment, and a family-friendly work environment.

### Potential for addressing barriers to joining

The UPF Gender Policy on Recruitment and Retention aims to be fully representative of and balanced as between male and female officers in order to meet the needs of all citizens. In this regard, the Policy prescribes targets for the recruitment of female officers in each district. The target for each district will be no less than 30% of all officers recruited; the Recruitment Policy will be reviewed in order to provide for affirmative action and special measures for geographical areas/regions where there are few female officers deployed and few potential officers who may meet the set requirements/criteria; and the Recruitment Guidelines will be reviewed to ensure that: (a) the criteria concerned enable more female applicants to qualify; and (b) recruitment teams include female and male officers who are gender-sensitive.

The Implementation Action Plan prioritises action designed to increase the number and visibility of female officers in the UPF by, among others: (a) reviewing the existing Recruitment Policy that currently provides for a 30% quota with regard to the recruitment of female officers and includes targets in respect of female recruits in each district/region and/or unit; (b) developing a plan for the targeted recruitment of female officers in areas that attract few female applicants; (c) reviewing current recruitment guidelines; (d) and reviewing the UPF's communications and advertising targeting female recruits. Actual practice indicates that steps taken to date have been minimal and, without further deliberate action, are unlikely to bridge the gender gap in the UPF which is apparent in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Recruitment trends disaggregated by gender, 2010–2015 (Source: UPF Human Resource Department)

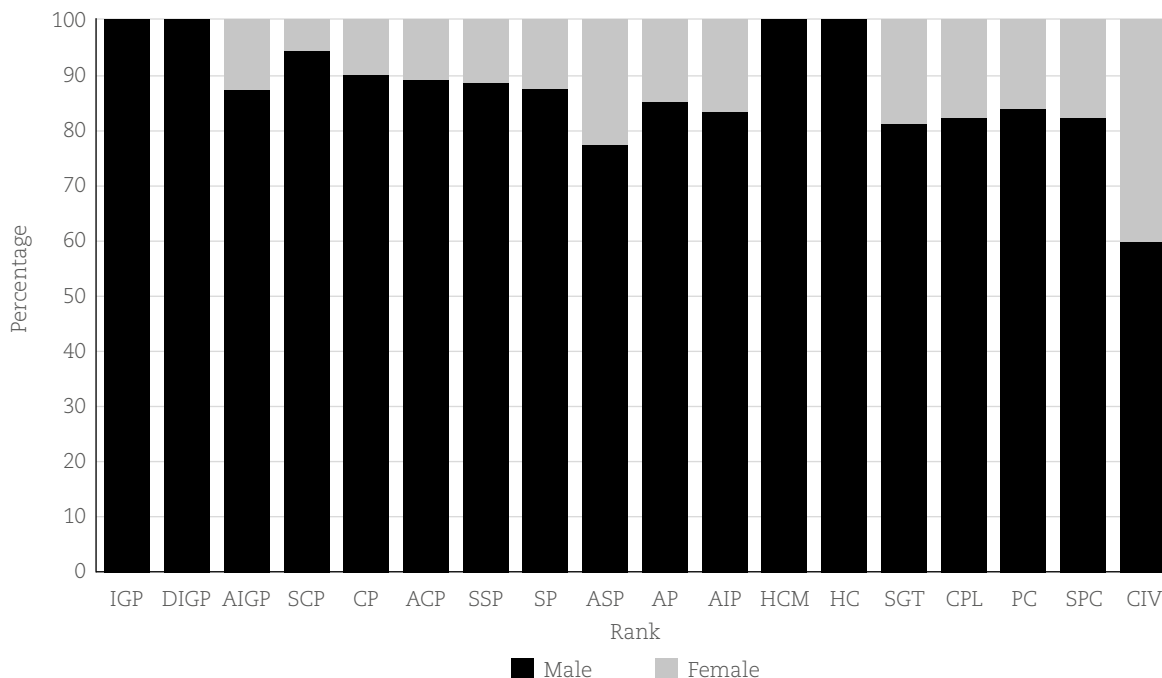


## **Addressing low female representation in leadership positions as well as limited influence in decision-making**

The Gender Policy places emphasis on cultivating leadership among, and promotion of, female officers to ensure that the UPF provides an environment that nurtures and supports female leaders in performing their roles effectively. In this regard, the Policy stipulates that the UPF's Police Advisory Committee (PAC) must ensure: that all committees in the UPF consist of a minimum of 30% of female officers; that female officers are deployed in command positions; that a Directorate of Gender and Women Affairs is established; and that a gender-responsive, intergenerational and inter-gendered mentoring and leadership programme specifically targeting junior female staff, is introduced.

However, UPF statistics indicate that representation of women in the higher ranks and in decision-making positions is still low and that men dominate leadership positions in the UPF structure at all levels (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Percentage of women in the UPF by rank, 2017  
(Source: UPF Human Resource Department)



Inadequate female representation at leadership and decision-making levels mutes women's voices and contributes to the low prioritisation of gender issues that disproportionately affect women.

### **Policy intention to address and introduce gender-responsive policies and procedures**

The UPF Gender Policy also aims to create a gender-sensitive and family-friendly work environment. In this regard, the UPF is obliged to: (a) introduce family-friendly policies to encourage work–life balance; (b) introduce flexible work practices, ensure adherence to duty shifts, and promote workload management and rationalisation of hours of duty as specified in the Human Resource Manual; (c) provide transportation for officers operating in distant duty locations, and prioritise accommodation facilities nearby, especially for female police officers; (d) allow female police officers three months or 60 working days of paid maternity leave, which must be taken; (e) ensure that female officers with babies of less than one year of age are not deployed on night duty unless requested by an individual officer; (f) ensure that



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EVERY EFFORT  
[SHOULD] BE  
MADE TO ALLOW  
FEMALE OFFICERS  
TO ATTEND  
TRAINING  
PROGRAMMES

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female officers who are more than six months' pregnant are not deployed on night duty or in areas that pose any danger to the female officer and /or her child; (g) design and provide all pregnant female officers with appropriate uniforms; (h) see to it that uniforms, including shoes, for female police officers are female-friendly; (i) provide female officers with small bags as part of their uniform for carrying emergency personal effects while on duty; and (j) ensure that pregnancy is not used to deny female officers opportunities for training and/or promotion.

At the time of the study, the challenges that the Policy seeks to address were still prevalent. For instance, the house-allocation policy had yet to be reviewed to make it more gender-responsive, and leave practices were still such that many women did not take annual leave for fear of being redeployed upon their return. Furthermore, the UPF Infrastructure Development Plan was silent on gender needs. However, the Uniform Committee had approved the design of gender-customised uniforms, though not maternity dresses, for serving officers.

### ***Addressing Ugandan Police Force norms, culture, policies and practices***

The Gender Policy also addresses gender bias and awareness across the UPF. The Policy stipulates that UPF training must be gender-responsive, with training facilities and an environment conducive to the full and active participation of female and male officers. Trainers are required to be well briefed on gender issues relevant to their course, such as the set target of at least 30% participation by female officers in the training programmes. The Policy also specifies: that basic infrastructure, including accommodation and sanitation at training institutes, be improved to make it more appealing to female participants; that child car seats and breastfeeding facilities be provided for officers with young children; and that every effort be made to allow female officers to attend training programmes or to allow them to attend the next available training programme. These intentions, too, are sound but are yet to be fully realised in practice. The number of women attending training programmes is still far below the policy requirements (See Figure 9).

### ***Addressing sexual-harassment concerns***

The Policy provides that sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse will not be tolerated in the workplace. The Strategy and Action Plan calls for regular statements to be issued to UPF members and the public regarding such position. This reaffirms, for UPF officers and personnel, the seriousness with which sexual harassment is considered and dealt with by the UPF. Notwithstanding the existence of such provisions, concerns were raised by female officers mainly related to the culture of trivialisation of issues of sexual harassment within the UPF. In addition, the absence of trusted mechanisms for handling such issues, coupled with

intimidation, often discourages victims from seeking justice, particularly when the alleged perpetrator is in a position of authority.

### ***Gender policy gaps***

What is worthy of note is that the Policy is silent on contributing to, shaping or influencing facilitative norms within the society that generates its human resources. Findings from the study classify the barriers to women's participation on the basis of internal and external factors. The external factors include societal norms, particularly those that define policing as masculine in nature, place expectations on women in terms of work and community life, and give rise to community perceptions regarding the UPF.

Changing societal expectations and biases is a lengthy process requiring comprehensive approaches that aim to change people's beliefs about, and attitudes to, participation in the UPF. The police force needs to champion and roll out public-awareness campaigns that challenge gender biases and stereotypes, that highlight role models, and that initiate dialogue. Collaboration and partnerships with other government departments, civil society and international organisations can further support the UPF's initiatives in engaging communities as part of its public relations exercise. Raising public awareness can be done in a number of ways, for instance by using billboards, television advertisements, television and radio programmes, online campaigns, mobile telephone alerts, and community events such as dialogues and sensitisation workshops.

The police can play a useful part in such campaigns given their leadership role in the community and because of the community's stereotyping of policing as being traditionally masculine. Partnerships between police services may also prove useful in challenging such stereotypes.

### **Challenges to effective implementation**

The implementation gap is significant with regard to the UPF Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan. The root causes and contributory factors cited are many, including: addressing only the peripheral and manifest issues but not the core transformational issues; inadequate technical, execution and coordination capacity within the Directorate and institutional functions charged with policy implementation; ineffective accountability structures (both internal and external); poor information flow across levels; a lack of resources; as well as priorities competing for leadership attention.

Transformation is a long-term and ongoing endeavour. Institutions like the UPF that are at an early stage of gender transformation are unlikely to be able to achieve the same results as those that have had more time to progress. There is greater appreciation of the gradual progression and reorientation towards gender transformation among the higher echelons of the UPF than among the lower echelons and members of the public. The Gender Policy and Strategic Plan are known to, and appreciated by, senior management and members in leadership roles. However, the majority of officers in the lower ranks have only heard about these. Although they were consulted during the drafting process, they are not aware of what happened afterwards with regard to the implementation or practicability of the Policy and Plan. This diminishes the level of accountability, since potential beneficiaries are not informed of their entitlements.

The Gender Strategy and Action Plan have also been reduced to a 'women issue'. Reducing gender to women only, tends to place the focus on individual women and not on relationships and the intersectional nature of gender oppression. This further limits progress with regard to gender mainstreaming within institutions, as most people see it as

empowering women more than men. It is important to emphasise that the concept 'gender' is not interchangeable with 'women'. 'Gender' refers to both women and men, and the relations between them. Promotion of gender equality should concern and engage men as well as women. Firstly, the UPF needs to identify men as allies in the pursuit of gender equality and involve them more actively in this work. Secondly, it has to be recognised that gender equality is not possible unless men change their attitudes and behaviour in many areas, for instance in relation to reproductive rights and health. Lastly, gender systems in place in many contexts are negative in nature for men as well as for women in that they create unrealistic demands on men and require men to behave in narrowly defined ways.

Responsibility for the implementation of the UPF Gender Policy rests with the UPF structure at various levels, including: the IGP; the PAC; the Police Council Gender Committee; the Police Council Gender Committee Directorate; the Gender, Child and Family Protection Directorate; other directorates, departments and units; and regions/districts/divisions. The adoption of gender-responsive strategies and approaches requires a foundation of commitment and support by top leadership that will enable the institution to address gender-related norms, practices, inequalities and disparities in the institution. There is a need to further engage and interest top leadership within the UPF to champion the implementation of, and effectively communicate and mainstream, the Strategic Plan across different policy areas and to adopt targeted actions to eliminate gender discrimination and enable progress in specific areas. Much effort is needed to interest, support and fully engage the UPF's top leadership in adopting practical approaches for implementing the various policies.

External to the UPF, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Justice, Law and Order Sector, and the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of Parliament are mandated to call upon the UPF to account with regard to its set targets. All external accountability institutions have commended the UPF for the progress made in formulating the Policy, Strategy and Action Plan and have expressed willingness to offer support in order to fast-track implementation. However, external accountability institutions must place more emphasis on working with the police to solve problems undermining the effective implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.

Finally, an opportunity exists to integrate the Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan fully in the UPF Strategic Development Plan for the next five years with effect from July 2020.<sup>11</sup> Integration will increase visibility, the allocation of resources, accountability for implementation, and the generation of gender-disaggregated data to inform decision-making. Gender-differentiated data and information are important in order for policymakers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies. Such data must be collected and analysed within the policymaking process. Ideally, it should cover several years so that changes can be tracked and corrective action taken. Civil society organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups, can be important allies in gathering information about the potential or actual impact of UPF policies; hence they should be consulted regularly. Surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are also effective methods for obtaining and analysing data on diversity policies, as are desk reviews, household surveys and focus-group discussions.

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11 In draft form at the time of the study.

# Recommendations

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No single programme will induce women to consistently apply to join the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and, upon joining, participate in operational policing (OP). The interaction of so many factors as indicated in the UPF Gender Policy makes the systemic barriers resilient to a single-problem-focused effort to bring about change. This is why technical interventions in recruitment processes need to be coupled with societal and institution-wide change in order to generate enduring behaviour change.

A series of possible entry points have been developed here for consideration. We believe that effective programming will need to be multifaceted and address institutional norms and processes relating to societal, institutional and individual factors.

## Recommendations pertaining to the external context

### *Engage the public in order to effect a change in social norms*

There is a need to stimulate popular support for women joining the police and participating in OP. We recommend consistent messaging by the UPF with a view to changing the philosophy and standards in respect of policing and participation by women in policing, and, even more importantly, inculcating the idea that OP contributes to positive policing outcomes. Identifying and publicising women police officers who can be considered role models and trendsetters might change public perceptions and help people believe that it is possible for women to thrive in the police force. Positive role models, including retired officers, have contributed to the weakening of constraining norms in the East Kyoga region that policing is a preserve for men. This has helped open up the space for more women applicants.

## Recommendations pertaining to the internal context

### ***Address institutional and structural factors that constrain women from applying for, and participating in, operational policing***

*Reconceptualise the contribution of women and consistently communicate the value of women in policing, and particularly OP*

By signing up to the Common Standards for Policing in East Africa ('Common Standards'), the UPF recognised the contribution of women to policing in Uganda. Many respondents pointed to 'an existing deficit of public confidence and trust in the UPF'. However, previous experiments in the utilisation of community policing have shown that such policing also transformed relationships between the police and communities; hence the consistent adoption of community policing could remedy this deficit. Most victims of crime are women, and human rights standards require that more women be available to respond to such crime. Studies have also shown that women are good at dealing with issues requiring conflict resolution – crime is one of these issues and needs not only be addressed solely by way of the criminal justice system. During United Nations peacekeeping missions where special measures to address working conditions have been put in place, women police officers have excelled and have proven that they are as competent and capable as their male counterparts. Women are likely to respond better to victims of crime and are more likely to adopt non-violent approaches to policing – thereby contributing to rebuilding the police brand and to better policing outcomes.

These invaluable contributions to the UPF are less likely to be achieved by way of modest shifts that make provision for women in the existing work environment, but without fully addressing their realities. The existing decision-making spaces are male-dominated and very unfamiliar with arguments regarding gender – some do not understand the cause, while many actively discourage such arguments or detract from them by pointing to the few visible women. A common understanding of what constitutes and what it will take to create a gender-friendly work environment cannot be assumed. The UPF leadership needs to triple its efforts and proactively drive this discourse within and outside the UPF in order to expressly recognise the contributions of women in their own right to the UPF. It must consistently communicate this vision and drive the harder institutional change and transformation needed to allow women to perform to their fullest potential. Leaders will have to be assisted with practical tools comprising new images and new messages that communicate this vision.

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## ***Implement the Uganda Police Force Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan***

The translation of the UPF Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan into practice is critical, as is the need to integrate the strategy into the UPF Strategic Development Plan for the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/2025. The Policy endeavours to push out the boundaries of understanding of gender within the UPF and provides a platform for engaging, and demanding accountability from, duty bearers. Establishing a Department of Gender and Women Affairs is only one step (the Policy envisages a complete Directorate with direct representation on the Police Advisory Committee (PAC)). The next step is to ensure that the set-up can fulfil its roles fully and effectively. More strategic and technical capacity, an increased budget, and a greater say in decision-making spaces (including the PAC) will be needed to support leadership to address structural changes in gender relations and promote the rights of women in UPF. The Department will need to consistently interrogate the extent to which internal policies adversely impact women applying for and participating in OP roles.

### ***Address institutional recruitment and deployment in respect of operational-policing processes and practices***

The UPF is already making improvements to its recruitment practices in order to attract more women. It is recommended that aggressive, short-term measures be taken together with a long-term/medium-term approach. At the current rate at which women are joining the UPF, and assuming responsibility across UPF ranks, gaps may exist throughout the next decade.

The following is recommended in the short term:

- **Develop a clear job description for officers wishing to join the police force.** Such job description should speak to their roles as well as the skills required (including skills in community policing) and should communicate these as part of the relevant job advertisement.
- **Place job advertisements where they are more likely to be seen by girls and women.**
- **Provide targeted pretesting information sessions (preferably conducted by women).** Such sessions should include information on: opportunities for career growth; training and deployment processes and considerations; leave; maternity and family benefits; reapplication processes; safeguards; and protection from sexual harassment. Job advertisements could also contain pictures of women performing policing functions.

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### ***Address issues relating to pre-entry training***

There is room for a professional gender audit of the content, course requirements and delivery of pre-entry training with a view to considering alternatives to those that adversely impact women, particularly where alternatives with lesser effects on women can deliver similar competencies. It would be interesting to further examine alternatives to the model involving 'tearing down and building up into the police mould', as well as its effects on the normalisation of the use of force. Other areas worthy of further attention include language used in training and scoring methods.

### ***Address issues relating to deployment in operational policing***

There is a need to re-examine existing practices with a view to adopting practices that do not undermine participation by women. The role of the UPF in deliberately supporting women to participate in OP ought to be clear and unwavering. The notion of women excelling in OP should not carry sinister shades of what is sometimes called 'a race to the bottom', whereby, for women to excel, they have to give up basic rights to a family, a family life, etc. Disincentives, for instance the size and weight of firearms and a one-gender uniform, need to be addressed in the immediate term. Family and gender needs are part of a women's reality. Homemaking and caregiving roles have to be prized by the UPF. Providing OP schedules that recognise this reality is a good starting point. Other issues include the following:

- The frequency of relocation needs to be managed and should take into account the effect on families.
- Of equal importance is that deploying officers must become more self-aware and address their individual attitudes and beliefs regarding the capability and desirability of women with regard to police operations.

*The following is recommended in the medium to long term:-*

#### **Recruitment ought to be treated as an ongoing process**

Recruitment should involve a much more assertive and dynamic campaign for recruiting women that will enable women to join as equal and valuable colleagues. The UPF needs to develop and implement a Women Recruitment Strategy that includes collaboration with universities and colleges. Programmes involving community schools, vocational institutions and universities should be ongoing throughout the year and not only be offered at the time of recruitment. It is also recommended that the UPF conduct further research to determine what attracts women to policing and integrate the findings in community messaging, barazas and outreach, community dialogues, career days at schools, etc.

#### **Address data management and utilisation to inform recruitment and deployment strategies**

A carefully managed data plan and ethos will reveal more insights than have been possible in this study and will determine with

precision where women are dropping out, stagnating or thriving during recruitment and OP. It is recommended that an experimentation approach be adopted that draws lessons from what worked in pre-application processes, testing, the various facets of training, and deployment, and what needs to change in respect of both recruitment and deployment practices. This will necessitate a periodic and comprehensive analysis of recruitment, deployment, training, placement, transfer and promotion data so as to continually motivate women and devise strategies for supporting them. Data on those who failed or dropped out will be equally useful for the above purposes. Disaggregation of data by factoring in age, gender, education and ethnicity will allow for a more nuanced understanding of how these factors influence the participation of women in OP at different levels.

*Develop gender leadership and technical capacity in the police force*

Collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), universities, think tanks, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), and specialist organisations for women is recommended in order to quickly build and sustain subject matter expertise and behavioural change capacity within the UPF. The Directorate for Women is one of special concern with an urgent need for a massive injection of sustained strategic and technical capacity development. The window for doing this is now open (but is not guaranteed to remain so) as a result of the responsive, transformative leadership in the UPF, political support, and the formative stage at which transformation presently finds itself. It is thus important to seize the opportunity to coalesce all actors, develop the required competencies, as well as demonstrate, through pilot projects, that it is possible to make gains even as the deep and far-reaching reforms are being pursued. The UPF also has much to gain from this opportunity. A fully functional unit will, among other things, lead efforts to innovate and to create mentoring and support programmes for women, support/fast-track women's efforts to organise themselves into a Uganda Association of Women in Policing; and fast-track gender audits of processes.

*Equip UPF personnel with the necessary skills, competencies and tools*

Such tools should include 'how-to' guidelines in order to translate mandates on gender equality into practice. There is a need to build the capacity of police officers to undertake activities that promote gender-sensitive policing practices.

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## Conclusion

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The Uganda Police Force (UPF) made history in 2017 by signing up to a progressive Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan aligned to the National Gender Policy, the Constitution of Uganda and the Common Standards for Policing in East Africa ('Common Standards'). The Policy reiterates the many advantages women bring to policing outcomes, particularly in transforming the relationships between the UPF and the community. However, increasing the representation of women in the UPF, and particularly in operational policing (OP), requires a thorough understanding of the obstacles that exist with regard to the hiring, deployment and empowerment of women. The present study documents these obstacles – both within the UPF and within the environment within which the UPF operates. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations outlined above will give further impetus to the UPF's leadership, the government of Uganda, development partners, civil society, and all interested partners to undertake the type of improvements necessary to meet or surpass the 30% minimum standard with regard to the representation of women in policing. Bold and innovative issue leadership, effective implementation of the Gender Policy, Strategy and Action Plan, policy and process changes within the UPF, and proactive community engagement will yield benefits not only for women, but also for men in the policing profession, the UPF as a whole, and the community at large.

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## Appendix 2: Definitions of key concepts

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The definitions of the following key concepts are based on those contained in the Uganda Police Force (UPF) National Gender Policy:

- Barrier:** Is a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart, or that prevents or blocks – a barrier may be a law, a rule or a problem that makes something difficult or impossible.
- Gender:** Is the social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, privileges, status, and access to, and control over, resources and benefits as between women and men, boys and girls in a given society. ‘Gender’ refers to the characteristics of men and women, boys and girls that are socially or culturally determined, as opposed to those that are biologically determined. It should be noted that addressing gender issues is distinct from addressing the needs of other vulnerable groups. However, there are gender concerns related to access to justice among various vulnerable groups and the Policy therefore provides the framework for addressing these specific gender dimensions.
- Gender analysis:** Examines the relationship between females and males. It provides information about community structures and the gender relations within them. Gender analysis asks simple questions with a view to understanding the ways in which women and men are able to influence and control their lives. Such questions can include: Who does what and where?; When do they do it?; Who owns resources and what resources do they own?; Who has the right to use the resources?; Who benefits?; Who loses? The knowledge gained through gender analysis helps us make better and more sustainable decisions with regard to projects/programmes. Gender analysis involves the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex which reveals the impact of a project on women and men.
- Gender responsiveness:** Means deliberately ensuring that policies, programmes, services and activities are influenced by a clear understanding of gender issues, and that such issues are addressed.

**Gender-responsive policing (GRP):**

Is an organisational strategy which employs mechanisms to enhance the feeling of safety, satisfaction and confidence among women by providing them with better access to justice and security and by ensuring effective, transparent and reliable policing services (UK Department for international Development, 2015).

**Gender-sensitive:**

Recognising the differences and inequalities between female and male needs, roles, responsibilities and identities.

**Sexual harassment:**

Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another where such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) is a partner with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) in a Regional Africa Programme to achieve demonstrable improvement in access to justice for all and implementation of human rights commitments in Africa. APCOF and RWI have been working to support regional and continental commitments and interventions in Africa that are designed to promote rights-based reform of police organisations and their operational culture.

In a baseline study on the implementation of the Common Standards for Policing in East Africa in Uganda, it was found that, despite the existence of a policy within the Uganda Police Force (UPF) that 30% of operational policing positions be filled by women officers, women have not applied for jobs in numbers that allow the UPF to fully achieve this policy objective. This study explores the barriers to women applying for, and joining, the UPF; and identifies how the recruitment policy and practice of the UPF can encourage more women to obtain operational policing positions.

## ABOUT CJSI

The Centre for Justice Studies And Innovations (CJSI) is a Ugandan organisation dedicated to promoting the rule of law, empowering people to claim and exercise their rights, and supporting the justice sector and local authorities in advancing justice. Since 2005, the CJSI has spearheaded research, proof-of-concept demonstration, innovative practices and policy advocacy, including the design of sector-wide solutions and driven reforms in the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS). It has also concerned itself with issues relating to justice for children, legal aid, social norms, and informal justice systems.

## ABOUT RWI

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) is an independent academic institution established at Lund University in Sweden in 1984. For more than 30 years, RWI has worked to promote human rights by means of education, research and institutional development through cooperation with primarily government, academic and national human rights institutions in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. RWI implements a wide range of human rights capacity development programmes internationally that seek to advance lasting change when it comes to the practical application of human rights through long-term, constructive cooperation with individuals, groups, institutions and organisations to maintain and strengthen abilities to define and achieve mutual human rights objectives, and through a process itself guided by human rights.

## ABOUT APCOF

The African Policing and Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) is a network of African policing practitioners from state and non-state institutions. It is active in promoting police reform through strengthening civilian oversight over the police in Africa. APCOF believes that strong and effective civilian oversight assists in restoring public confidence in the police; promotes a culture of human rights, integrity and transparency within the police; and strengthens working relationships between the police and the community.

APCOF achieves its goals through undertaking research and providing technical support and capacity building to state and non-state actors including civil society organisations, the police and new and emerging oversight bodies in Africa.

APCOF was established in 2004, and its Secretariat is based in Cape Town, South Africa.

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