

# STRENGTH WITH COMPASSION: HOW WOMEN IN UGANDA PRISONS ARE CHANGING THE FACE OF CORRECTIONS



LADIES IN UGANDA PRISONS TOP LEADERSHIP *FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Ms. Stella Nabunya, Commissioner of Prisons (Prisons Health Services), Ms. Aliyo Natukunda, Ag. Senior Commissioner of Prisons (Legal Advisory Services and Human Rights), Ms. Juliet Nantale, Commissioner of Prisons (Rehabilitation and Reintegration), Ms. Geraldine Najjuma, Ag. Senior Commissioner of Prisons (Industries) and Ms. Brenda Sana, Commissioner of Prisons (Human Resource Planning and Development).*

On this International Women’s Day, we celebrate the professionalism and dedication of women serving in the Uganda Prisons Service. They work in one of the most demanding security environments in the country. These women manage prison facilities, supervise rehabilitation programs, enforce lawful custody, and uphold discipline with integrity. Beyond the uniform, they are mothers, mentors, community leaders, and role models. Their contribution goes far beyond security — they are steadily changing the face of corrections in Uganda through strength and compassion.

Today, Uganda Prisons has 3,979 female officers, representing over 30 percent of the total staff strength. Among them are 113 senior officers, 171 principal officers, and 3,695 non-commissioned officers. This strong representation shows steady progress in promoting gender inclusion and equal opportunity. What was once a male-dominated profession has grown into a more balanced and professional service where women play key roles across all departments.

At the highest level of leadership, women are actively shaping strategy, policy, and institutional direction. Two female officers currently serve in top management: Ms. Prossy Geraldine Najuma, Ag. Senior Commissioner of Prisons in charge of Prisons Industries, and Ms. Aliyo Natukunda, Ag. Senior Commissioner of Prisons in charge of Legal Affairs and Human Rights. Their positions show confidence in women's leadership at the highest decision-making level.

Several other senior managers continue to provide strong leadership in important departments. Commissioner of Prisons Juliet Nantale is in charge of Rehabilitation and Reintegration, guiding programs that prepare inmates for successful return to society. Commissioner of Prisons Brenda Sana oversees Human Resource Planning and Development, strengthening career growth and professionalism within the Service. Commissioner of Prisons Stella Nabunya leads Prisons Health Services, ensuring quality medical care for both inmates and staff.

Assistant Commissioner of Prisons Peace Christine Babirye heads the ICT department, supporting digital transformation. Assistant Commissioner of Prisons Mary Centenary serves as the Ag. Commandant of the Prisons Academy and Training School, helping train the next generation of officers. Ms. Sarah Nalwanga serves as Assistant Commissioner for Community Corrections, while Ms. Patricia Nyachwo is the Assistant Commissioner for Accounts. Beyond these leaders, many other female senior officers — from Assistant Superintendents of Prisons to Senior Superintendents — head various sections and divisions at Prisons Headquarters.

Women have also risen to important field command positions across the country. Assistant Commissioner of Prisons Mary Tamale serves as the Regional Prisons Commander for East Central. Senior Superintendent of Prisons Maureen Ninsiima commands the Western Region, while Senior Superintendent of Prisons Ann Kyatuhairu oversees the Mid Central Region. Their leadership shows that women are fully capable of managing and leading operations at the regional level. Alongside them, other women serve as District Prisons Commandants and Staff Officers.



***Women have shaped the Service with patriotism, strength, integrity, and compassion.***

These appointments show trust in their ability to lead and manage operations. At the district level, several women have taken on the demanding role of Officers-in-Charge of main and farm prisons. Among them are Superintendent of Prisons Viola Biryomumaisho at Mityana, Superintendent of Prisons Juliet Najuma at Kaugamukono, Superintendent of Prisons Vivian Namali at Masindi, Superintendent of Prisons Victoria Achan at Ntenjeru-Kayunga, Superintendent of Prisons Brenda Fasie Abasa at Lira, and Assistant Superintendent of Prisons Dr. Agnes Namukasa at Kiburara. Others serve as Deputy Officers-in-Charge at different stations across the country. Their leadership at facility level directly affects daily security, welfare, and rehabilitation.

The growth of women in the Service goes hand in hand with Uganda Prisons' commitment to international human rights standards. The institution has implemented the Nelson Mandela Rules, which guide the humane treatment of prisoners, respect for dignity, access to healthcare, and professional conduct in prisons. Uganda Prisons has also adopted the Bangkok Rules, which focus on the treatment of women prisoners and promote gender-sensitive approaches in corrections.



***UPS has empowered female senior officers to lead at middle-level management across prison units nationwide, strengthening professionalism, accountability, and inclusive leadership within the Service.***

Through these standards, special attention is given to maternal health, reproductive care, accommodation for mothers with children, counseling services, and protection from abuse or discrimination. Female officers play a key role in making sure these standards are followed in daily practice. Their presence strengthens compliance,

protects dignity, and ensures that sensitive issues affecting female inmates are handled with care and respect.

Beyond custody, women officers are central to rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. They supervise vocational training in tailoring, hairdressing, baking, agriculture, crafts, and other income-generating skills. They support education and life-skills training, helping inmates prepare for a better future. Many female inmates come with difficult life experiences and emotional challenges. Female officers often act as mentors and counselors, helping them rebuild confidence and hope. Their balanced approach — firm but understanding — creates space for real change.



***Female inmates are contributing to national development through hard work, learning new skills, and taking part in production activities. Through farming, tailoring, baking, crafts and other rehabilitation programs, they support production, create useful products and prepare to become responsible citizens.***

At the same time, women in the Uganda Prisons Service carry out core security duties. They manage perimeter security, supervise inmate movements, respond to emergencies, and maintain order within prison facilities. Their performance challenges old stereotypes and shows that leadership in corrections depends on discipline, professionalism, and integrity — not gender.

While handling these demanding responsibilities, many female officers also manage family life. They work night shifts, perform escort and court duties, accept transfers and handle operational pressure while raising children and supporting extended families. Their resilience inspires their communities and encourages young girls to consider careers in public service and security institutions.

The Uganda Prisons Service has also invested in building strong and professional female sports teams in Netball, Football, and Handball. These teams compete in national leagues and have emerged champions at various levels.

Notably, the She Maroons Football Club has consistently competed at the highest level of women's football in Uganda, while the Uganda Prisons Netball Club and the Uganda Prisons Handball Club have also excelled in national competitions. Many players from these teams have gone on to represent Uganda's national teams in regional and international tournaments.



Through sports, Uganda Prisons has empowered the girl child by providing structured opportunities, professional mentorship, education support, and career pathways within a disciplined institution. Young girls across the country now see uniformed women excelling not only in security roles but also in competitive sports at national level. This visibility breaks stereotypes, builds confidence and inspires ambition. Uganda Prisons stands out as one of the few security institutions that has deliberately integrated sports development into staff welfare, talent nurturing, and national service.