

## MJAP EXTENDS INTEGRATED HEALTH SERVICES TO MOBILE POPULATIONS ON MV SIGULU FERRY IN NAMAYINGO DISTRICT

*A pioneering partnership for health access and resilience on Lake Victoria*

Namayingo District, perched along the shores of Lake Victoria in Eastern Uganda, is a place defined by water. Nearly 75 percent of its landscape is water-bound, dotted with 13 inhabited islands, yet only four have functional public health facilities. For an estimated 66,000 residents, this geography is both a lifeline and a limitation. While the lake sustains livelihoods through fishing and trade, it also isolates communities from essential health services. Reaching a health facility can mean hours on a boat, navigating unpredictable weather, and bearing high transport costs. The district's HIV prevalence stands at 5.8%, above the regional average of 4%, while teenage pregnancy rates reach 22%, four percentage points higher than the regional average, underscoring the urgent need for innovative and integrated approaches to health service delivery

To bridge this gap, Makerere University Joint AIDS Program (MJAP), through the US Department of State-funded Local Partner Health Services – East Central (LPHS-EC) Activity, in partnership with the Namayingo District Local Government, and Ministry of Works and Transport, launched an innovative onboard health clinic on the MV Sigulu Ferry—a vessel that interconnects Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania



*Photo: Banda David-offering Health Education to travellers on the MV Sigulu Ferry-Namayingo District*

The MV Sigulu Ferry, provides free transport across the islands, carrying over 300 passengers per route, four times a week, translating to over 62,000 passengers reached annually. It serves as a vital link between the islands, and the mainland. Its steady movement of people presented a unique opportunity for MJAP and the district leadership to deliver integrated people-centered health services to communities that would otherwise remain underserved.

The Ministry of works and transport provided space on the ferry that hosts the clinic. The ferry management also provides security to the clinic equipment and maintains orderliness. Namayingo District Local Government mobilized its health care workers and health commodities to support

service delivery on the ferry. LPHS-EC facilitates participating health workers with transport refund from their health facilities to the docking site, and SDA while supporting ferry health services away from their workstations.

---

*\*I have spent two months working on this ferry, where my primary role is to support TB and HIV services among travellers. TB patients identified during the screenings are linked to nearby health facilities for continued care and treatment\*. **Ibanda David, Nurse, Bukana HC III.***

---

Through this joint initiative, MJAP and the district health team have brought HIV testing, TB screening, and sample collection directly to the people—right where they live, work, and travel. The onboard team includes trained health workers from local health facilities, supported by MJAP to ensure quality service delivery and referral linkages.



*Photo: Patrick Wandera, a medical Laboratory Assistant pricking a client to test her for HIV AIDS aboard the MV Sigulu Ferry.*

*"On a daily basis, we receive approximately 15 clients. We conduct TB screening and collect samples for testing, which we send to Buyinja HC IV for analysis. Clients needing additional care are referred to Bukana HC III. **Patrick Wandera, Medical Laboratory Assistant, Bukana HC III.***

In August and September 2025, the ferry-based clinic provided integrated health services to travelers and island communities, reaching 208 clients with TB screening. Of these, 46 were identified as presumptive and 3 were confirmed with TB, all of whom were initiated on treatment. Additionally, 250 travelers were screened and tested for HIV, with all results returning negative and receiving post-test counselling and linkage support. Among 85 clients presenting with fever, malaria screening identified 8 positive cases, all started on appropriate treatment. The team also vaccinated 311 individuals against yellow fever.

---

“This clinic on the ferry is a priority for us because we now receive comprehensive HIV services with privacy and convenience. Most of us cannot easily reach health facilities, but now we can walk freely and get served. It also saves our transport costs,” -**Nagudi, ferry service beneficiary.**



PHOTO: Different Passengers boarding the MV Sigulu to Dolwe Island in Namayingo District.