

BY ROBERT MUHEREZA

KABALE. Health authorities in Kigezi Sub-region have welcomed the deployment of a mobile Tuberculosis (TB) laboratory and clinic van, saying it will strengthen early detection, ease access to screening services and improve follow-up of patients who previously dropped out of care.

Kabale Regional Referral Hospital on Tuesday received the multi-million-shilling mobile TB lab and clinic van from the Ministry of Health. Hospital director Dr Filbert Nyeko said health workers have already been trained to operate the facility, while the ministry committed to meeting fuel and maintenance costs.

Dr Nyeko described the mobile unit as a major boost to TB diagnosis and treatment in the region.

"The equipment comprises five key components: a vehicle, a computer-assisted digital X-ray, an X-ray interpreter, a GeneXpert machine and an HIV testing machine. It is also fitted with solar power and a standby generator to en-

New mobile lab gives boost to TB fight in Kigezi

sure smooth operation," he said.

He added the van will be deployed to TB hotspot areas across the region, including parts of Rukungiri District, to bring services closer to communities that struggle to access fixed health facilities.

"This is a significant achievement not only for Kabale Regional Referral Hospital but for the entire Kigezi region," Dr Nyeko said.

The Kigezi regional TB and leprosy coordinator, Ms Teddy Tushabe, said the mobile lab has arrived at a critical time when TB cases remain high in many communities. She noted that the van will help trace patients who previously abandoned treatment, often due to transport challenges and long distances to health centres.

"Although the van may not reach some of the steep hills in Kigezi, it will be stationed at accessible community

centres where people can easily receive services," Ms Tushabe said. She added that the mobile clinic will also be used to screen patients for other conditions, including hypertension, diabetes and leprosy, alongside TB and HIV.

Kabale District TB coordinator Geofrey Nkurunziza said the mobile lab will provide an alternative screen-

LAB COMPONENTS

The mobile TB lab and clinic van uses digital X-ray technology, CAD4TB software and a GeneXpert machine to screen high-risk populations. It is equipped with solar power, a generator and mobile Internet connectivity to support real-time diagnosis and reporting.

ing option for people living in hard-to-reach areas. He expressed optimism that the initiative will improve case detection and treatment outcomes.

"On average, Kabale District registers about 46 TB cases every month. Some of the contributing factors include tobacco smoking and the sharing of local alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks," Mr Nkurunziza said. He identified Kamuganguzi and Maziba sub-counties, as well as the Northern and Southern divisions of Kabale Municipality, as key TB hotspot areas.

The Kabale District health educator, Mr Alfred Bensigensi, urged residents experiencing TB symptoms to take advantage of the mobile services for early diagnosis and treatment. He said late detection often leads to severe complications and increases the risk of transmission within communities.

"The advantage of this equipment is

that it is mobile, unlike the fixed GeneXpert machines we have relied on in the past," Mr Bensigensi said. "I am hopeful that it will significantly reduce the TB burden in our region."

Health officials remain concerned about the rise of Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) in Kigezi. In September last year, experts reported several MDR-TB cases, largely attributed to poor adherence to treatment.

Ms Tushabe said about 25 MDR-TB cases were recorded between January and September 2025, compared to about 20 cases in 2024. She called for stronger community health education and multi-sectoral collaboration to promote early diagnosis and ensure patients complete their treatment.

"Preventing drug resistance requires consistent follow-up and patient support, because MDR-TB is difficult and costly to treat," she said.