Massachusetts General Hospital
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

Tribute from Massachusetts General Hospital

September 23, 2026

To the family of Dr. Stephen Asiimwe, friends, colleagues, and all gathered in his memory

It is with profound sadness and a heavy heart that I send this tribute on behalf of the leadership, faculty, staff, trainees, researchers, and collaborators of the Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Global Health in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. We join you in mourning Dr. Stephen Asiimwe, and we do so with deep respect, affection, and gratitude for the life he lived and the many lives he touched.

We were deeply shocked and devastated by the sudden passing of Dr. Stephen. The news of his death has left our community grieving, alongside you, the loss of an extraordinary colleague. Stephen was a cherished member of our team, a leader in the movement for global health equity, a friend, a mentor, and a brother-figure. His absence is felt not only in our work, but in the relationships, conversations, and shared purpose that he helped nurture over many years. A feeling of heavy loss pervades the Mass General Hospital Center for Global Health today, where Stephen's photograph features prominently on our walls, just as his work, wisdom, and camaraderie were so prominent in our long-standing collaboration in Mbarara, Uganda.

To Stephen's wife, Maureen, his children, his family, his friends, his colleagues, and all who loved him, I extend my deepest condolences and the condolences of the entire Mass General Hospital community. Please know that we are holding you in our thoughts and prayers during this profoundly difficult time. Although words cannot ease the pain of such a loss, we hope there may be some comfort in knowing how important Stephen was to us, how deeply he was loved and respected, and that Stephen's influence and impact reached far across the globe.

Dr. Asiimwe was an accomplished physician-scientist, epidemiologist, and public health specialist with two decades of experience in health systems, medical research, and disease prevention. His career reflected a deep commitment to strengthening health systems, advancing rigorous research, and improving public health in Uganda and beyond.

Dr. Asiimwe began collaborating with investigators from the Mass General Center for Global Health in 2009 on the development of an HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis trial. He then joined the Mass General collaboration in 2015 as a Principal Investigator of an important study in Uganda and South Africa to support HIV treatment and policy. From the very beginning, Stephen distinguished himself through his exceptional leadership, unwavering commitment to scientific excellence, and deep prioritization of the communities he served. He brought wisdom, integrity, and compassion to every aspect of his work, earning the respect and admiration of colleagues in Uganda, in the US, and around the globe.

Building upon that foundation, in 2018 Dr. Asiimwe was selected after an international search to be the Program Director of the MGH Global Health Collaborative, providing essential leadership in furthering the partnership linking Mass General Hospital with Mbarara University

of Science and Technology and Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital in Uganda. During his tenure, Stephen was instrumental in advancing the Collaborative's mission of caring for patients and communities and advancing research and education. His leadership in the flagship Uganda First Mile Program contributed to tremendous impact on improving patient care and health outcomes by increasing skills among nurses and doctors, building the capacity of faculty and nurses to mentor and train others, establishing specialty care, and bringing care into community health centers throughout southwestern Uganda.

Stephen was instrumental in advancing many areas of our shared work. I cannot overstate how important his partnership and collaboration were to me personally, as well as to our collective ambitions of achieving 'health for all'. One example stands out to share - his dedication to the construction of a special pathogens unit in Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, with an oxygen- generating unit, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stephen's adaptability through the crisis of COVID-19, his hard work, persistence, and charisma in attracting other donors to contribute to the project, and his deft navigation of the local issues and regulations for a new construction project were nothing short of remarkable. In recent years, Stephen spent time advising our MGH Global Health strategy, collaborating as a Principal Investigator on many research endeavors, and pushing us to keep our minds on decentralizing our efforts and focusing on communities. His wisdom and counsel have been invaluable to me personally, as well as to our entire Mass General-based community of practitioners, scholars, and students.

The measure of Stephen's contributions cannot be captured in titles alone. More than 50 members of the Mass General Hospital community gathered when we heard the awful news and shared countless stories of his impact on each and every one of us. He served as Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, mentor, advisor, and collaborator on numerous research studies that advanced knowledge and improved health outcomes. He taught Harvard Medical Students, and Mass General trainees. He was a passionate advocate for community health and believed deeply that research should serve the needs of communities and improve people's lives. He inspired generations of researchers and health professionals by demonstrating that scientific rigor and community engagement must go hand in hand.
Many among us had the privilege of learning from Stephen firsthand. He shared his knowledge generously and celebrated the achievements of others with genuine joy. His leadership was marked not only by excellence but also by humility, kindness, and an extraordinary ability to bring people together. Stephen spoke constantly about his family – his wife and children being a source of pride and joy.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Stephen was a multi-talented person with a passion for Uganda, and a passion to share Ugandan culture. He regularly accompanied our community members on hikes, walks, trips to the countryside, nature explorations and dance and musical appreciation activities, helping us deepen our cultural connections to the place where we have developed strong ties. When the First Mile Program came to a close and we celebrated its achievements while commiserating its ending, Stephen danced all night long with more than 100 collaborators and colleagues, allowing none of us to finish the project in sadness, focusing instead on the possibilities for the future. He will be remembered for his warmth, charisma, friendship, and humanity. He built lasting relationships across continents and cultures, leaving a profound impact on everyone fortunate enough to know him.

We honor a life dedicated to service, learning, mentorship, and the advancement of health and well-being for others. While we mourn Stephen's loss, we also celebrate the remarkable legacy he leaves behind: a legacy of scientific excellence, compassionate leadership, deep partnership, and enduring service to communities.

Dr. Stephen Asiimwe's achievements will endure through countless individuals whose lives were touched by his wisdom, generosity, and leadership; through his scientific achievements, his writing and papers; through the scholarships he facilitated, the people he mentored, and through the public health work that will continue because he believed so deeply in the dignity, health, and well-being of every community he served. His legacy will live on through his beloved wife and children.

May his memory be a blessing, may his family and all who loved him be comforted, and may his legacy continue to inspire future generations. We will never forget the profound impact that he has had on all of us.

With deepest sympathy,



Louise Ivers MD, MPH, FIDSA, FASTMH

on behalf of the

Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Global Health
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Memorial Remarks for Dr. Stephen Asiimwe

Mark Siedner, MD

One of my most cherished memories of Stephen took place at a time much like this. A time of loss and mourning. We were attending the funeral of a dear friend and colleague in Uganda. Much like today, I was feeling heartbroken, confused, frustrated. My inclination was to return to my apartment, to be alone in my thoughts and grief. At that moment, Stephen bestowed upon me one of the innumerable gifts he shared during our years together. He flashed that beaming smile of his and said – "Mark, this is a time for us to be together." Along with Maureen, the three of us spent the next two days in solidarity doing many things Stephen loves: driving in his beloved pickup truck, touring the majestic Ugandan countryside, and listening to music: in this instance, Paul Simon's Graceland on repeat.

We drove through verdant tea plantations and up through to the base of the Rwenzori Mountains, where we got out, looked across the expanse of three countries that converge there, and reminded ourselves about the ephemerality of life. We drove to Kisiizi Falls, a grand, 100-ft waterfall and considered how stunning the natural beauty of Uganda was. But mostly we talked about our departed friend, shared stories of times he made us laugh and proud, and how grateful we were to have known him.

We arrived late that evening at a roadside hotel. It was a dark evening. I was emotionally exhausted and slept deeply. I awoke the next morning to a beautiful dawn and had breakfast in a courtyard, decorated with Ugandan sculptures. I remember that Stephen said to me that this was a beginning, not an end.

I'll be forever grateful for those two days I had with Stephen. As I stand here in mourning, I am trying to remember and be true to all the things he taught me: that, at times like this, we are stronger together than alone; that it often feels darkest just before the dawn; and that we owe it to our loved ones not to turn in at times of challenge and grief, but to reach out, to celebrate them and to share their lessons generously.

Jessica Haberer, MD, MS

It is with deep sadness that I write these few words in remembrance of our dear friend and colleague, Stephen Asiimwe. I had the true honor and pleasure of knowing him for the past 17 years. We began our work together on the study that would ultimately demonstrate the efficacy of a game changing HIV prevention tool—PrEP. We then went on to share numerous other studies related to HIV medication adherence and associated conditions. We also shared many common goals and efforts in promoting equity in global health as well as career development for the next generation of scientists.

Beyond our shared professional activities, we had, over the years, many opportunities for truly meaningful conversations about life. We talked about what really matters—friendship, family, contributions to our communities and society. We shared a love of reading and exchanged books with each other. Stephen had a wonderful way of challenging me to think deeply and often differently about so many topics. Honestly, he would sometimes say the most outrageous things… and very unexpectedly so. I'm sure many of you had similar experiences. Whether it was about politics, current events, or medicine, we always had lively debates, and I left them a better person. I will always be grateful for that.

Stephen was very kind to often schlep me around Mbarara or to and from Kabwohe, and I will dearly miss our talks along the way. Being in Mbarara won't be the same without him. I will miss his smile. I will miss his laugh. And I will miss his friendship. I extend my deepest condolences to Maureen and their children, as well as to the enormous community he loved so much.

Azfar Hossain, MD

My name is Azfar Hossain, and I am fortunate to call myself one of Dr. Stephen's many students.

I am still sitting with shock, sadness, and what I can only describe as loneliness after his passing, and I know we will all continue to feel those emotions for a very long time. It is a mark of the remarkable impact Dr. Stephen had on all of us.

I wanted to share a few words on that impact, which I have been reflecting on as I try to process this news and think about how we may be able to honor Dr. Stephen's legacy moving forward.

Stephen had so many qualities and achievements which make this loss so hard. All of us know his professional brilliance: his hundreds of published articles, his thousands of treated patients, and his endless number of mentees across the Global Health

Collaborative, Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital and globally.

Stephen was so well-spoken, but he always made way for others to have the spotlight; he was so funny, even if his favorite jokes were often about marrying me off to the highest bidder; and he had an infectious love of nature, which taught me and so many others how to appreciate the outdoors ourselves, even as his hikes were deeply stressing us.

Above everything, the quality I remember the most and miss the most about Stephen was his unparalleled ability to make all of us feel like the workplace was our home.

When Stephen and I first met, it didn't matter that I was a lowly student who had never stepped foot in Uganda and who didn't speak more than two words of Runyankole.

From my very first day in his office, he spent countless hours reviewing and editing my work so I could shine in front of others; he invited me to his house more times than I could count then went out of his way to welcome my entire family too; he refused to let me travel alone and drove me all across Uganda and Rwanda again and again and again; and through it all he always made me feel like a whole person, not just an employee or co-worker.

I will never be able to repay that debt that I owe to Stephen, but I hope I am able to one day pay it forward to someone else as one way of honoring his unparalleled mentorship. Stephen proved that it is possible to do work that changes the world for the better while also changing each other for the better.

So with that I'll end by sharing my deepest condolences to Maureen and all of Stephen's incredible family, as well as to all of his extended community in Uganda and the US and globally, and by challenging all of us, as we mourn this huge loss, to honor Stephen's legacy by trying to treat people the way that he did. Thank you.

Annet Kembabazi, MSc

First, I would like to sincerely thank Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) for organizing this memorial service in honour of our dear colleague, Dr. Stephen Asiimwe, and for inviting us to join you in remembering and celebrating his life. This gesture means a great deal to us, particularly to his family, friends, and colleagues who had the privilege of working closely with him.

I had the privilege of working with Stephen from 2015, first as a Study Coordinator, then as his deputy when he became Program Director in 2018, and later as his office mate from 2020 until his passing. I knew him not only as a leader but also as a mentor, colleague, and friend.

Stephen believed in excellence, efficiency, and working smart. I can still hear him say, “Annet, we need to work smart,” as he patiently guided me. He mentored many, strengthened our partnership, and contributed to important developments at Mbarara University and Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital.

Beyond his professional achievements, Stephen was a deeply caring person. When I lost my husband in 2020, he and his family stood by me and my children. He would bring us mangoes on his truck and ensure that my children had opportunities to interact and play with other children. These simple acts of kindness brought comfort during one of the hardest seasons of my life. I will remain forever grateful to Stephen and his family. He reminded us that leadership is not only about what we accomplish, but also about how we care for others.

Stephen also knew how to bring people together beyond the workplace. He never missed our end-of-year celebrations, and I am sure many of us remember his participation in our musical chairs, sack races, dancing, and other team activities. Those moments of laughter and togetherness revealed another side of Stephen; a warm, joyful person who understood that strong teams are built not only through work but also through friendship and shared experiences. These are memories we will treasure.

To his wife, Mauren and to the children (Emma, Jonathan, Timothy, and Crystal) and tohis mother Mrs. Ruth Sande and your children, please accept our heartfelt condolences. We share in your grief, and we want you to know that the bond Stephen built with us extends beyond the workplace. You remain part of our family.

As we remember Stephen today, may we honour him by working smart, pursuing excellence, mentoring others, and caring for one another as he did.

Stephen, thank you for your leadership, your friendship, the laughter we shared, and the kindness you showed my family and me. Your absence leaves a profound void, but your legacy will continue to guide us.

May you rest in eternal glory. You will be deeply missed and never forgotten.

Thank you,

Annet Kembabazi