



Kenya Pharmaceutical Association
— *Pharmaceutical Excellence* —

OPC PROJECT SUCCESS STORY · MERU COUNTY

“If it isn’t Documented, it hasn’t been Done”

The Meru Pharmaceutical Technologist who turned a Chemist into a confidante

How Rosan Chemist, on Meru Town’s Tom Mboya Street, went from dispensing pills to dispelling a myth that could have cost a young woman her fertility.

Somewhere in Meru town, a young woman once believed something that could have changed the entire course of her life: that using family planning would mean she'd never carry a child again. A friend had told her so. She believed it enough to walk into Rosan Chemist frightened, hesitant, almost ready to leave without answers.



She didn't leave. And that decision – to stay, ask, and be told the truth – is exactly the kind of moment the Optimizing the Pharmacy Channel (OPC) Project was built to create.

“Because she had been told by a friend of hers that if she used family planning methods, she would never get a baby,” recalls Rose Atoo Mwita, the pharmaceutical technologist, owner of Rosan Chemist and a member of Kenya Pharmaceutical Association. “So, we provided counseling. We answered her questions and helped her make an informed choice.”

The client returned later – not with complaints, but with gratitude. She'd dispelled the myth for herself. Then she did something Rose didn't expect: she went and dispelled it for someone else too.



“What touched us most was that she later encouraged another woman to seek accurate information instead of relying on rumors. It showed us that the impact of the project can extend beyond one client to the wider community.”

“WE WERE PURELY DISPENSING”

Three years ago, family planning at Rosan Chemist looked nothing like this. Rose is candid about it: her pharmacy offered the service, technically – but without real understanding behind it.

“We were purely dispensing, just dispensing the products as the client required,” she says. “Before the OPC, we had no knowledge concerning the methods... We didn’t know much about family planning and what it held.”

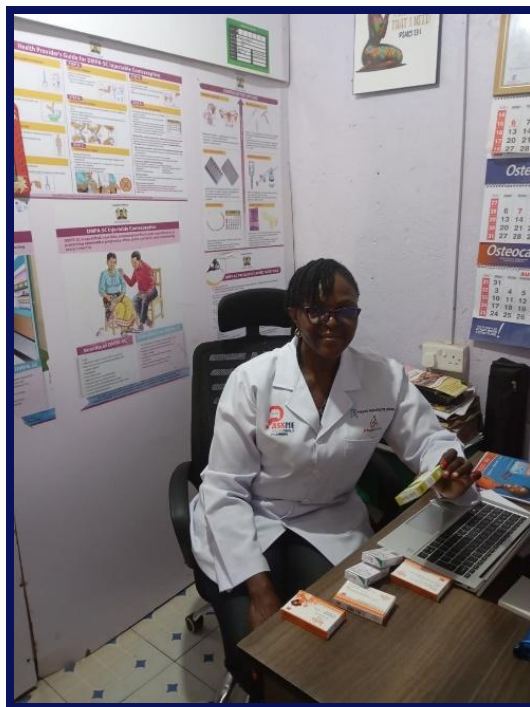
It’s an admission a lot of pharmacies might be reluctant to publish. Rose says it plainly, because it’s precisely the gap OPC training closed.



FROM TRANSACTION TO CONVERSATION

“The training was a major turning point for us,” Rose says. It didn’t just add facts to her toolkit – it changed what she considered her job to be. “Before the training, our focus could easily have been on providing the requested commodity. But after the training, we became more conscious of listening to the clients, understanding their needs, providing accurate information, discussing possible concerns, and allowing the client to make an informed choice.”

Technical assistance visits reinforced it. Experts assessed her documentation, her stock management, her privacy setup – the “safe space” clients now use – and gave direct feedback. “The overall assessment helps us to improve simply providing a service to providing a more structured and quality family planning care,” she says.



A PROUD MOMENT FRAMED ON THE WALL



When Rosan Chemist received its Ministry of Health accreditation certificate and Unique Identifier, Rose describes the feeling in a single word: pride.

“Receiving the Ministry of Health accreditation certificate and the identifier was a very, very proud moment for us. It demonstrated that a pharmacy can be a legitimate and important partner in improving access to family planning services.”

And it changed how clients behaved, not just how they felt. “People increasingly see us not only as a place to buy medication, but also as a place where they can seek reliable health information and appropriate family planning services,” she says. Speaking candidly as a business owner, she adds: “It has improved visibility and client confidence, and this has contributed to increased utilization of our services. However, for us, the greatest benefit is the trust we have built with our clients.”

THE CLIENTS WHO CALL BEFORE THEY EVER WALK IN

Rosan Chemist’s move onto Google Maps and social media did something Rose says she genuinely didn’t anticipate: it gave shy clients a way in that didn’t require walking through the door first.

“Clients may be uncomfortable visiting the pharmacy physically, but once they get this information through the social media, then they are able now to come with a lot of confidence... they feel that all their issues are handled privately,” she explains. She fields calls regularly now from people who found her purely through a map pin. “For me, this is my best moment to feel that my pharmacy is on social media and on Google Maps.”





NO CLIENT TURNED AWAY EMPTY-HANDED

Before OPC, Rose says, “our pharmacy operated just like any other private pharmacy with no interaction or connection with the government health facility.” Today, Rosan Chemist is formally linked to Meru Level 5 Hospital – meaning when a client needs something beyond the pharmacy’s scope, like a contraceptive implant, she doesn’t have to send them away uncertain.

“We can confidently refer them to a nearby facility... We are also able to explain where they should go and why the referral is necessary. This has reduced delays and helped ensure that clients do not simply go home without receiving the services they need.”



“IF IT ISN’T DOCUMENTED, IT HASN’T BEEN DONE”



Ask Rose about data reporting – usually the least glamorous part of any health project – and she doesn't hedge. She's become one of its advocates.

“Data is the one that informs decision making. Data is the one that informs what is happening on the ground. As the saying goes, if it is not documented, then it hasn't been done.”

It's a striking thing to hear a small-town pharmacy owner say with such conviction – proof that OPC's influence reached beyond clinical skills into how she thinks about proving her pharmacy's value to the wider health system.

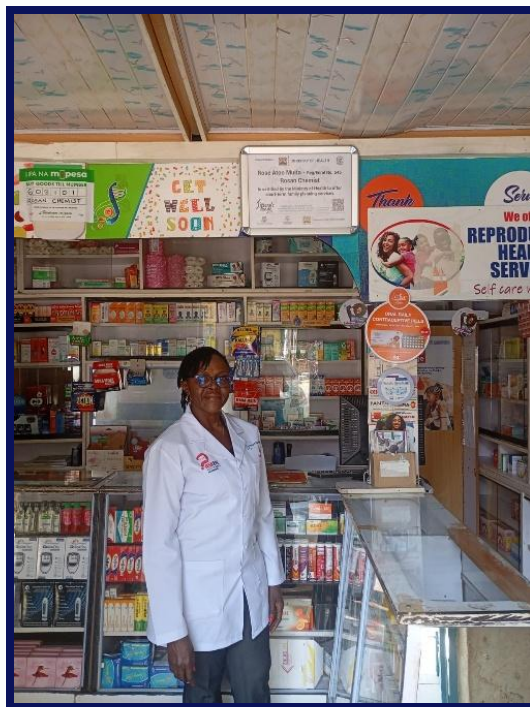
FROM SHOP TO SANCTUARY

Asked to name the project's greatest transformation, Rose doesn't talk about revenue or client numbers first. She talks about what her pharmacy has become to the people who walk into it.

“Initially, we mainly viewed the pharmacy as a place where clients come to purchase medication. Through the OPC project, we have realized that pharmacy is a place where clients can come and feel safe and receive their health information... in confidentiality.”

Her one-sentence summary of three years says it best: OPC, she says, “transformed our pharmacy from simply being a place where clients buy medicine into a trusted, confidential and reliable point of access to quality family planning information, counselling and services.”





HER MESSAGE TO PHARMACIES STILL ON THE SIDELINES

For pharmacies not yet part of OPC, Rose's advice carries the weight of someone who has lived the transformation firsthand: "Do not see it simply as another project. See it as an opportunity to improve your pharmacy and make a real difference in people's lives."

Her closing words are simpler still, and harder to argue with: "I am really grateful and happy to have been included in this OPC project because it gave us knowledge, confidence and systems to serve our clients better and become a trusted partner in family planning within our community."

Rosan Chemist is one of over 150 community pharmacies across 10 counties participating in the Optimizing the Pharmacy Channel (OPC) Project, implemented by the Kenya Pharmaceutical Association, with support from County Health Management Teams, the Ministry of Health, and the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.



EDITOR'S REMARKS

By Cletus Otieno, Project Administrator, Optimizing the Pharmacy Channel (OPC) Project, KPA.



When I sat across from Rose Atoo Mwita in Meru town, I expected a routine interview. I didn't expect to walk away thinking about a rumor.

A young woman had been told, by someone she trusted, that family planning would take her ability to have children away from her. She almost let that rumor make her decision for her. What stopped it wasn't a poster or a policy – it was Rose choosing to sit with her, answer her questions, and let her leave with facts instead of fear. That is the entire purpose of the OPC Project distilled into a single conversation.

What stays with me most, though, is what Rose said almost as an aside: “if it is not documented, then it hasn't been done.” I have sat through many conversations about the importance of data reporting – most of them from people trying to convince pharmacies why it matters. Rose didn't need convincing. She had already arrived at that conclusion herself, from the ground, from her own counter in Meru.

Three years ago, Rosan Chemist was, in Rose's own words, “purely dispensing.” Today, it is a place where a frightened client can become a confident one, and then go on to change another woman's mind, too. That ripple – one honest conversation becoming two, then more – is what OPC Project set out to build.

To Rose Atoo Mwita: thank you for your openness, your advocacy for data you didn't have to champion, and for reminding me why this project matters, one client at a time.

