Honorine Mugorewase’s completion of her studies and getting a well-paying job at a public company importing pharmaceuticals came with happiness but not comfort. Then, foreign suppliers dominated the sub-sector, and dependence on them coupled with challenges characteristic of import trade prompted her to aspire for a supplier driven by passion to find a homegrown solution.

It was against this backdrop that she made a bold decision to start her entrepreneurship journey.

In 2012, Mugorewase founded MNR East Africa Ltd, involved in importation of pharmaceuticals and distribution. Today, the company specializes in importing essential medical products, including HIV and malaria test kits, along with other basic supplies commonly used in healthcare facilities.

Childhood memories

“I had unpleasant past. The path I chose to tread involved ups and downs. The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi interrupted my education. Schools closed countrywide amid those dark days. But soon, I got married and we were blessed with children,” recalls Mugorewase.

“In spite of the gift of a happy family and beautiful children, I remained restless with a feeling that I needed to upgrade my education which became a huge toll on my life,” says Mugorewase.

Thirsty for knowledge grew to immeasurable levels, and once her children began school, she took a brave step: she returned to the classroom. Bit by bit, she advanced her education—eventually earning both undergraduate and master’s degrees.

“I was able to go back and complete my education because of the opportunities given to women after Rwanda’s liberation,” she reflects, “I even earned a scholarship for my excellent performance – a chance I never dreamt ever before.”

Armed with a wealth of knowledge and experience, and motivated by the desire to prove that Rwandan women could lead in sectors once considered off-limits, she launched her own company with just three employees and limited capital.

Her goal was clear: to create jobs, to serve her country, and to demonstrate that women could thrive in enterprise.

“The start was not easy,” she recalls, “Ihad little capital and could only buy a small stock of products. But through smart partnerships and creative thinking, we began to grow steadily.”

Today, the company has become a trusted name, winning large government contracts and attracting clients from across the region. Her dream now stretches even further—she plans to build a manufacturing plant to locally produce some of the medical supplies she currently imports.

Much of her inspiration comes from the country’s post-genocide transformation, particularly the leadership’s commitment to gender equality.

“Rwandan leadership has truly empowered women,” she says, “It gave us confidence to believe in ourselves and go after what we want. When a woman is empowered, a whole nation is empowered. Women support families and communities, driving the country’s economic development.”

Mugorewase attributes women’s emancipation to the leadership of H.E President Paul Kagame. She notes the all-inclusive leadership and people-centred governance in Rwanda has launched reforms, creating an enabling environment for women’s empowerment.

She believes the potential in women is enormous. What many need is self-esteem, confidence and resilience, and develop a culture of learning from others. In societies where patriarchal norms still dominate, she calls for a shift in mindset.

“If a girl starts a company, support her. She is just as capable and can be a catalyst for national progress.”

Women entrepreneurs are playing a critical role in Rwanda’s development—through job creation, tax contributions, and increased production across sectors.

Mugorewase encourages women to be confident, emphasizing that they possess the strength and ability to succeed—and should fully embrace those qualities. She believes that self-employment fosters personal and professional growth, and urges aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women, to pursue their dreams—even if it means starting small and building gradually.

She also advises Rwandans to cherish their country and its leadership, to protect and preserve the progress that has been made, and to remain committed to driving continued development.

Mugorewase story is one of perseverance and purpose. It’s a story of what happens when courage meets opportunity—and how the spirit of enterprise can lift not just individuals, but entire communities.