Muhanga town, once reliant on a single hospital and health center, faced a dire shortage of medical services until 2009. That year marked a turning point when two healthcare visionaries conceived the idea of establishing a private practice to alleviate the pressure on existing public medical facilities in the area.

Pacifique Munezero, a seasoned healthcare professional, had witnessed firsthand the struggles of people with limited access to healthcare options. Driven by a deep sense of responsibility and a desire to make a difference, Munezero founded Polyclinique Médicale la Providence, the first private clinic in Muhanga.

Pacifique Munezero, founder of Polyclinique Médicale la Providence, the first private clinic in Muhanga.

Situated in Gahogo Cell, Nyamabuye Sector of Muhanga District, the polyclinic was established with a clear vision: to enhance healthcare services for the local community. What began modestly as a small clinic offering basic healthcare services by a general practitioner has since evolved into a comprehensive Polyclinique licensed by the Ministry of Health.

“When we opened this facility, there was no private practice in Muhanga. Kabgayi Hospital, the only such facility, was overwhelmed by the demands of the population it served,” Munezero recalls. “We started slowly, offering just a few services. But as we introduced more, patient numbers grew, and we began to see our dream of improving healthcare in Muhanga take shape.”

Dr Mitima Prince, Director of clinic services at Polyclinique Médicale la Providence

Today, Polyclinique Médicale la Providence offers a wide range of specialized services that are highly sought after, including internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, dermatology, ENT, dentistry, maternity, family medicine, laboratory services, and hospitalization. This expansion has significantly reduced the burden on Kabgayi Hospital, providing the community with more options for accessing high-quality healthcare.

Looking ahead, the Polyclinique has ambitious plans to expand its infrastructure by adding more rooms and increasing its capacity beyond the initial 13 beds. Additionally, they aim to procure radiography equipment, a much-needed service in Muhanga.

As the Polyclinique continues to grow, it has become a vital healthcare hub not only for residents of Muhanga but also for those from other districts, particularly in the Southern Province. The facility has provided much-needed medical services to individuals who previously had to travel long distances to Kigali or Huye for care.

The impact of Polyclinique Médicale la Providence has not gone unnoticed. Various stakeholders, including Muhanga District authorities, have recognized the Polyclinique's contributions to local healthcare. The district works closely with the Polyclinique, providing support and creating a conducive environment for private sector operations.

"We are partners," Munezero notes. "Whenever we need assistance from the district, they are quick to support us and offer advice on how to improve our work." The Polyclinique also collaborates closely with Kabgayi District Hospital, ensuring seamless patient transfers to referral hospitals when necessary.

Despite its successes, the Polyclinique faces challenges, particularly with delays in insurance payments. A significant portion of its revenue comes from insurance companies, but delayed claims hinder the facility's operations. Additionally, rising prices and inflation, coupled with the depreciation of the Rwandan franc, have created financial pressures. Medical practices are still operating with rates set in 2017, despite the escalating costs of goods and services.

Beyond healthcare, Polyclinique Médicale la Providence has contributed to the economic development of the Muhanga community by creating employment opportunities for doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, and administrative staff.

Munezero takes pride in leading such a dedicated team, recognizing their invaluable contributions to delivering quality healthcare. "Working alongside this team is a deeply rewarding experience," she says, expressing her gratitude for their commitment.

She also emphasizes the importance of Rwanda's leadership in creating a secure environment for businesses to thrive. "Rwanda's good governance, peace, and

security have accelerated development. The government, led by the RPF, has lifted citizens from poverty, improved lives, and maintained a stable environment that allows us to operate successfully.”