

# Apondi's smart route to mobile health

Through WhatsApp, Google Meet, and private consultations, Omondi guides women across different stages of pregnancy, creating a safe space for questions and anxieties.

Twenty-four-year-old Ruth Apondi Omondi's August 2025 win of the Top 40 Under 40 Women award in the social Impact category from the Kenyan news publication *Business Daily* marked a milestone in her lifesaving work.

"It's special to everyone because mothers are very important. We bring life, and it's good that I'm able to impact them and my efforts were recognised, inasmuch as we're still in the early stages. This is a big award. As we progress, there's going to be more of Smart Mama, yes," she told *Bird*.

Smart Mama is a mobile health platform that Omondi created in 2024. The idea, she said, was simple: to bring trusted, clinically accurate information directly to mothers, into their phones, homes and virtual conversations.

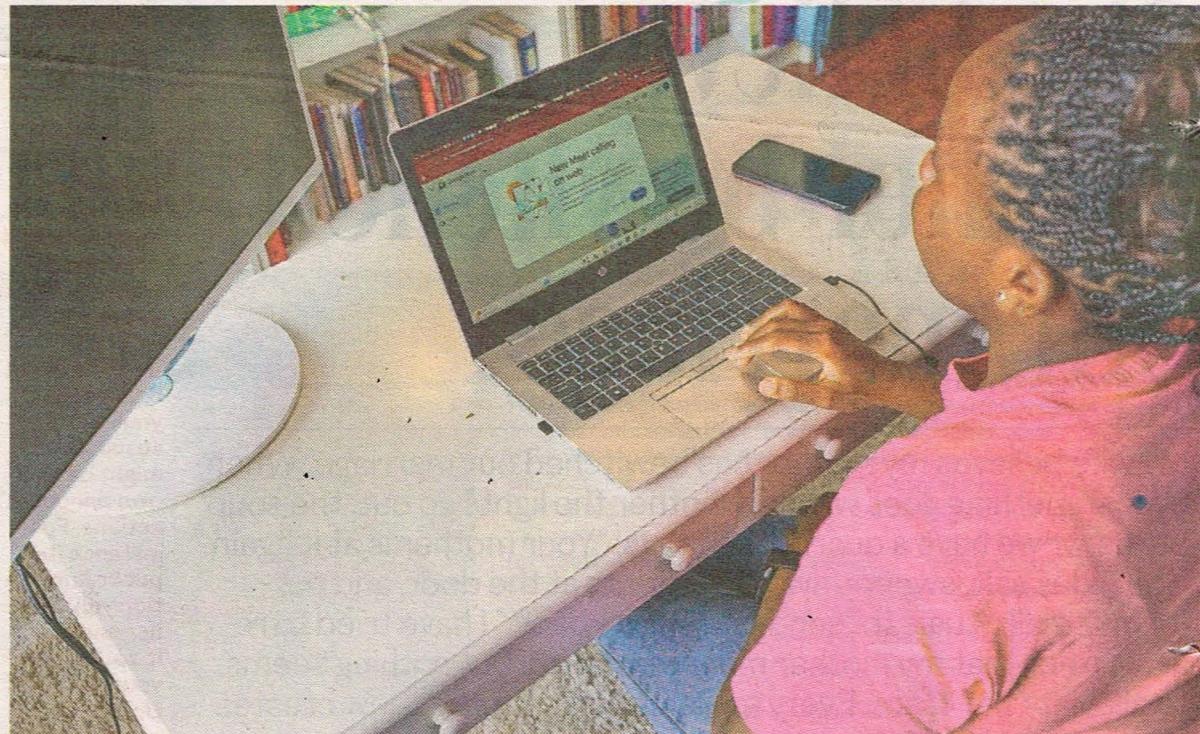
"A client contacts me via my social media pages, and then I ask them what trimester they're in in pregnancy or how many weeks. I gather their history, and then I show them the list of topics per session that I have. I call that list 'smart mama' health topics," she added.

National reports from Kenya's Min-

istry of Health show that many lower-level facilities lack the capacity for life-saving obstetric care. Inaccessibility to skilled care and critical information still places women at unnecessary risk. Smart Mama steps directly into that gap: not as a replacement for clinics, but as a bridge. A way to help women recognise danger early, understand their pregnancies, and know when to seek help. The platform's accessibility is a major advantage.

"So I chose simple technologies like Google Meet and WhatsApp because one, they are easily accessible. I mean, I have Google Meet and WhatsApp on my phone. Again, they are cheaper compared to now having to build an entire app or an entire platform on my own. I think it is going to take a longer time, so just start with whatever I have," she said.

Her early client base was small—about 25 women whom she followed closely—but her community reach is wider through group forums. She measures the impact of Smart Mama through the many mothers who message her after delivery.



Apondi Omondi, founder of Smart Mama, working on her laptop during a consultation session. PHOTO/COURTESY

"I am satisfied when I see a mother holding a baby...when I get their feedback and experiences... I know I am making an impact," she said.

Omondi was a nursing student at Kenyatta University (an experience chronicled in a book she later wrote called *Trials and Triumphs: Chronicles of a Student Nurse*) when she came up with the idea for Smart Mama. In April 2024, she participated in a university hackathon. Her group didn't win, but something more important happened: she walked away with a sharpened sense of problem-solving and the seed

of an idea.

"I figured if a woman gets this information—if she learns something new—she's going to be smart. So: smart and mama. Smart Mama."

It was her experiences making rounds at Pumwani Maternity Hospital, the largest in the country, during her final year as a student nurse in 2024 that made her appreciate how great the needs were in maternal care. The hospital was consistently crowded, under-resourced.

"The last reported figures is that we have around 23 nurses for 100,000 so

when you translate that and when you come down and now start looking at these facilities that are taking care of these mothers, like the labour ward, like the clinic, the antenatal clinic where these mothers go, you may find that there is one person," Jacqueline Kituku, a lecturer at Kenyatta University where she teaches about maternal health care. "So, what does that mean? It means that one person or just a few have a burden of taking care of very many patients."