

KAYONZA: Roads leading to the University of Rwanda's Rukara Campus have been repaired and houses along them repainted ahead of tomorrow's graduation ceremony. Residents say they were told to do it because government officials and other guests will pass through.

UR holds its 12th graduation at the campus on Friday, 23 October. Government officials, academicians, parents and local leaders are expected, along with the graduands and academic staff.

One resident, repainting his house when Rwanda Dispatch visited, said local authorities told people living near the road to repair their homes. "We hear special guests will be passing on this road on their way to the university," he said.

In the trading centre, a few metres from the campus, shops have been repainted and repair crews are still working on the road.

The renovation work has been good for business. Ntare, who prefers to be called by his single name, runs a restaurant near the campus (videwo) and says he has fed more than 50 customers at midday and been busy all day, much of it serving the workers who did the renovations.

Friday, he says, will be bigger. "I have stocked drinks, and we are ready to cook for the visitors," he said, using the local word for customers. He normally cooks for university students, and graduands will want to celebrate too. "This is an opportunity we can't miss to make money."

Samson Nshutiyimana, a youth in mid-20 said the ceremony means work for young people in the village. "When we're called to work, we get paid afterwards," he said. "If more graduations come to Rukara, we can put down the hoes. Jobs are scarce and the cost of living keeps rising."

It is the rainy season, and heavy rain in the area is a worry. Motorcycle taxi rider Innocent Kwizera said he has fuelled his bike for what he expects to be a busy day, ferrying guests and graduates from the main road to the campus. He said the road was in poor condition before the repairs, and he hopes the rain does not spoil the day.

"UR needs to hold more events, because that is how we benefit by offering our services," he said.

In nearby Gahini, residents told Dispatch they are also pleased with the road repairs, which came as the community celebrates the election of their bishop. Bishop Manasseh Gahima of Gahini Diocese was elected Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Rwanda on 11 September, and his consecration is scheduled for 25 October at Camp Kigali. A mass was held in Gahini to bid him farewell.

According to UR, 4,953 graduands will receive their qualifications: 3,036 men and 1,917 women. UR says undergraduates number 3,783 and postgraduates 1,170, up 51% from 773 last year. It says PhD graduates rose from 35 to 49.

Campus administration says security, logistics and venue setup are being finalised.