

First Lady Jeannette Kagame praised Rwanda's ongoing commitment to inclusive education for girls, emphasizing its positive impact on families and national development during the 20th anniversary celebration of the Imbuto Foundation.

Speaking at the event held at Intare Conference Arena, the First Lady highlighted how empowering girls through education benefits not only the individual but also the broader community and the nation. "We have understood that raising our children well benefits not only the children themselves but also the family and the entire nation," she said.

The Imbuto Foundation, launched in 2005 by the First Lady, has focused on promoting equal access to education for girls and providing support to keep them in school and help them excel academically. The anniversary marked two decades of the foundation's flagship program, Inkubito z'Icyenza, which honors outstanding female students.

"This anniversary is not just a celebration of achievements but also of dreams we once had," Mrs. Kagame said. "Today, we see those dreams have become reality, and the progress continues."



Among the beneficiaries of Inkubito z'Icyenza are professionals working as doctors, security officers, and community leaders, who serve as role models demonstrating how Rwanda values girls' contributions to development.

She also praised the government's "He For She" initiative for encouraging boys to support gender equality, noting a shift in attitudes as more young men embrace and celebrate their sisters' successes.

"Girls who are given opportunities should believe in themselves, strive for progress, and collaborate with others," she said, urging leaders to continue supporting youth development.

This year, the foundation recognized 471 high-achieving girls nationwide, awarding 123 during the ceremony and others at their respective schools. Awards included school supplies, savings startup funds, and technology training for secondary school graduates.

Minister of State for Education Claudette Irere highlighted Rwanda's progress

toward gender parity in education, noting that girls make up 50.5% of primary students and 60% of secondary students, though university enrollment still favors boys at 67% compared to 36% for girls.

“Girls must continue to pursue studies in science, technology, engineering, and vocational fields,” Irere said, “to close the remaining gaps.”

Shami Elodie, executive director of the Imbuto Foundation, called education for girls the foundation of national development, affirming the foundation’s commitment to working with families and partners to ensure girls reach their full potential.

Other speakers included Dr. Kayesu Janet, a former Inkubito z’Icyeza awardee now practicing medicine, and Michelle Murungi, Investment Director at the National Development Agency, who encouraged girls to believe in their dreams and work hard to achieve them.

Gender Minister Consolée Uwimana and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie Secretary-General Louise Mushikiwabo also urged the young women to uphold strong values and continue striving for excellence.

The event concluded with a pledge from Shema Blessing Gianna, speaking on behalf of the awardees, to remain committed to personal growth and contributing to Rwanda’s development.