Rwanda’s civic education program for young people is seeking to strengthen responsibility, discipline and national values among a new generation of citizens, as officials highlight challenges including drug abuse and unplanned pregnancies affecting some youth.

The 16th edition of the Indangamirwa program brought together 769 young Rwandans studying at universities in Rwanda and abroad, with officials saying the training aims to prepare participants to become responsible citizens and contribute to the country’s future.

Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement Dr. Jean Damascène Bizimana said the program provides an opportunity to identify challenges affecting young people while helping them make informed choices about their lives.

“The challenges affecting young people are also present here. We found two young people with problems related to drug use, and we also found two girls who were pregnant with unplanned pregnancies at a young age, which meant they could not complete the program,” Bizimana said.

Dr. Jean Damascène Bizimana, Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement

He said the cases demonstrate the importance of continued efforts to promote values, responsible behavior and awareness among young people.

Bizimana said participants had committed themselves to becoming part of efforts to address issues affecting their generation, including fighting drug abuse.

He added that young Rwandans studying abroad have a responsibility to represent their country positively by embracing useful knowledge and experiences from other societies while maintaining values that reflect Rwandan culture.

“They should choose the good things they find abroad and reject practices that are not appropriate or that conflict with Rwandan values,” he said.

Indangamirwa expands as youth engagement grows

Bizimana said the 16th edition of Indangamirwa recorded the highest number of participants since the program began.

Previous editions had generally attracted fewer than 500 young people, while this year’s program brought together 769 participants.

Among them were 137 young Rwandans living abroad, including 66 girls and 71 boys. The number of participants increased particularly from the United Kingdom and the United States.

The minister said bringing together young people from Rwanda and abroad helps strengthen their understanding of the country’s history, culture and responsibilities as citizens.

Program focuses on history, values and civic responsibility

The Indangamirwa program includes discussions with senior government officials and Rwanda Defence Force representatives, as well as visits to sites of historical importance.

Participants visited the Kiziguro Genocide Memorial and the Liberation Struggle Museum at Mulindi in Gicumbi District, where they learned more about Rwanda’s history and the events that shaped the country.

Bizimana said the program is intended to help young Rwandans develop a stronger sense of identity, understand their responsibilities and become active contributors to national development.

The minister’s remarks came as President Paul Kagame met with participants and urged them to maintain discipline, avoid drug abuse and take responsibility for protecting Rwanda’s future.