

President Paul Kagame on Tuesday urged young Rwandans taking part in a national civic education program to avoid drug abuse and other harmful behaviors, saying discipline, responsibility and patriotism would be critical to their role in Rwanda's future.

Kagame made the remarks while meeting 769 participants of the 16th edition of the Indangamirwa program, which brings together young Rwandans studying at universities in Rwanda and abroad for civic education and lessons on the country's history, values and responsibilities.

He told the youth that drug abuse and excessive alcohol consumption damage individuals, families and society by affecting people's health, productivity and ability to contribute to national development.

"Tell me the truth, have you ever seen someone whose life was improved by marijuana? If there is anyone you have seen, bring them to me. I will reward you for finding that person," Kagame said.

The president said he had never seen an individual or a country achieve development through drug use, arguing that substance abuse has instead been linked to health problems, poverty, family difficulties and insecurity.

"Someone who comes and gives evidence saying, 'this is where I came from, this is where I am today, and this is what I achieved because of marijuana,' I have searched for such a person and failed to find one," he said.

Kagame also emphasized the importance of discipline, saying knowledge and skills alone cannot deliver success unless they are supported by good character and commitment.

"Respect, self-respect and the search for knowledge — when you have discipline, it adds value to what you have learned. Discipline is important because it keeps you from leaving your goals and engaging in things that do not build you but can destroy you," he said.

He urged the youth to build their lives around hard work, integrity and responsibility rather than choices that could affect their future.



Rwanda's security depends on citizens, Kagame says

During the discussion, Kagame also addressed concerns about Rwanda's security at a time of rising global tensions and conflicts.

He was responding to a question from participant Ineza Kelia, who asked whether Rwanda was prepared to remain secure as instability increases in different parts of the world.

Kagame said Rwanda could not solve all global security challenges but could protect its own stability through the commitment of its citizens.

"Rwanda must remain secure, and it will remain secure because of you, depending on how you fulfill the responsibilities you have toward your country," he said.

He said history has shown that global security has never been guaranteed for everyone at the same time, recalling that Rwanda experienced insecurity even during periods when some parts of the world were considered stable.

"There were people 20 or 30 years ago who could say the world was secure, but at that time we did not have security. That was the period when we lost our people," Kagame said.

He said international organizations established to maintain peace and enforce global rules appear to face growing challenges in responding to conflicts.

Kagame said Rwanda's priority should be protecting its own security while contributing where possible to wider peace efforts.

"We do not have the ability to make a major contribution to protecting the whole world. What we can do is protect our world, which is Rwanda, first and foremost," he said.

Youth should become problem-solvers

Kagame told the participants that Rwanda had gone through difficult periods, including the liberation struggle and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, but that the current responsibility was to build a country fit for future generations.

He urged young people not to wait for others to solve their problems but to take

initiative and develop solutions themselves.

“Become people who solve problems because the solutions are within you. You have the ability to find solutions to challenges,” he said.

He encouraged young Rwandans to pursue ideas and work together, whether in government or the private sector.

“Why should another person be responsible for solving your problems? Why don’t you put in the effort to do something that can improve your life?” he asked.

He said even ideas that fail can provide lessons and lead to future success.

“If you have 10 ideas and present them, perhaps six of them will work,” Kagame said.

The 16th edition of Indangamirwa brought together 769 participants, the largest number since the program began. It included 137 young Rwandans from abroad, including 66 girls and 71 boys.

Participants also visited historical sites, including the Kiziguro Genocide Memorial and the Liberation Struggle Museum at Mulindi in Gicumbi District, as part of efforts to strengthen their understanding of Rwanda’s history and civic responsibilities.