

On a warm morning in Bugarura, the clang of metal and the hum of sewing machines blend with the chatter of students arriving for their practical sessions. Inside one workshop, a group of learners carefully align timber for a carpentry assignment; in another, fashion students adjust fabric on mannequins as they prepare new designs. Just outside, electrical trainees test connections with quiet focus.

This is **Kirehe Technical Secondary School (Kirehe TSS)**—a place where ambition becomes action, where rural youth are shaping their futures with their own hands, and where a once-remote district is slowly emerging as a beacon of technical excellence.

### **A School Built for Opportunity**

Located in Kigina Sector, Kirehe TSS opened its doors in 2010 to meet a pressing need: giving young people in this region access to quality vocational education. Today, with **463 students** enrolled from Level 3 to Level 5, it has grown into one of Kirehe District’s most important education hubs.



*The Principal of Kirehe TSS, Iledephonse Barambanza*

“The school was established as a Vocational Training Centre, and it has greatly benefited the community,” says Principal Iledephonse Barambanza. “Parents now have a place nearby where their children can gain practical, employable skills.”

The school combines academic learning with hands-on practice, ensuring that every learner develops both confidence and competence. Modern workshops, dedicated teachers, and a culture of innovation have created an environment where students don’t just study—they build, design, repair, craft, and create.

### **Practical Skills Take Center Stage**



Kirehe TSS offers six major technical programs, all designed to prepare students for the real world:

- Fashion Design

- Building Construction
- Plumbing Technology
- Manufacturing Technology
- Electrical Technology
- Wood Technology

To broaden access, the school also runs short courses in Carpentry, Tailoring, Masonry, Welding, Plumbing, and Electrical Installation and Maintenance. These programs equip the youth—especially those who need quick, valuable skills that open doors.

By last year, the school had already graduated over 780 students, many of whom now work in the private sector, serve in public institutions, or run their own businesses. Some have even continued to higher learning institutions, carrying with them the technical foundation they built at Kirehe TSS.

### **Learning by Doing: The Production Unit**

One of the school's biggest strengths is its well-established production unit, where students learn by taking on real projects for the community. Working alongside instructors, they produce furniture, metal doors and windows, graduation gowns, and other goods.

"This unit gives students real experience and also helps sustain the school," Principal Barambanza explains. "It proves that skills have both economic and social value."



The revenue supports school needs and creates a learning environment deeply tied to community realities.

Kirehe TSS has partnered with various local institutions to offer internships and field experience, helping students transition smoothly into the workforce. Other partners sponsor trainees in short courses and even provide starter toolkits, enabling graduates to start micro-enterprises immediately.

This approach has transformed the local labour market. Many graduates no longer wait for job openings—they create their own.



## **Serves the Community while Shaping the Next Generation of Innovators**

Beyond academics, Kirehe TSS is deeply woven into community development. Students participate in charity initiatives such as building homes for vulnerable families and support social programs.

The school administration also steps in where it can—supporting households with medical insurance and contributing to local development initiatives.

Even some of the school’s own infrastructure—a new classroom block and a manufacturing workshop—was constructed through student and teacher teamwork.

For Principal Barambanza, education at Kirehe TSS is more than certification—it is transformation.

“We are fortunate that our country provides a clear direction aligned with global needs,” he reflects. “The world today requires us to turn knowledge into solutions. Young people must learn this earlier rather than later.”

His message to Rwanda’s youth is direct and inspiring: “Join TVET. Learn practical skills. Innovate. The world is changing fast, and hands-on skills are the passport to the future.”



## **A Rising Centre of Excellence**

From welding sparks to wood shavings, students at Kirehe TSS are crafting a new narrative for Kirehe District—one built on skill, self-reliance, and opportunity.

In a community once considered distant and rural, a new generation of makers, designers, builders, and problem-solvers is emerging. And at the heart of this transformation stands Kirehe TSS—a school proving that with the right skills, young people can create not just their own futures, but brighter futures for their community.