

Rwanda has recorded a 30% reduction in maternal mortality over the past two years as it expands the use of digital health systems to identify risks and connect patients with care, Minister of State for Health Dr. Yvan Butera said on Wednesday.

Butera made the announcement while opening the fifth Africa HealthTech Summit (AHTS5) at the Kigali Convention Centre, where African health leaders, technology experts and development partners are discussing how digital systems and artificial intelligence can improve healthcare.

The three-day summit is being held under the theme **“Wellness for All: Powered by Intelligent Health Systems.”**

“Early detection is key,” Butera told delegates, explaining how Rwanda has moved community health workers from paper-based records to electronic systems.

The minister said more than 54,000 community health workers across the country have been equipped with smartphones to collect health information and monitor patients, including pregnant women and children.

The information is linked to health facilities, allowing health workers to identify risks earlier and doctors to follow patients more closely.

“We can scan the country and see where we have stockouts, where we have a pattern of high fever, where we have a concentration of high blood pressure,” Butera said.

He said electronic medical records are also being connected across different levels of the health system. Health centres can access information collected in communities, hospitals can view information from their catchment areas, while specialists can monitor high-risk pregnancies.

The use of technology in healthcare was a central issue at the summit, with AHTS chairman Jean-Philbert Nsengimana calling for greater accountability as countries move from digital health experiments to systems that operate at scale.

“What we want to see over the next five years is accountability,” Nsengimana said.

He said Africa had developed numerous digital health projects but too many had remained at the pilot stage.

“Africa has therefore become a graveyard for health-tech pilots,” he said.

Dr Eric Remera, director of Rwanda’s National Health Intelligence Center, said the centre was helping bring together health data and turn it into information that can support decisions by health leaders and frontline workers.

The centre forms part of Rwanda’s wider effort to move from paper records towards interconnected digital health systems.

Butera said the systems were particularly useful in maternal healthcare because they allow health workers to identify women who need specialist attention and connect them with higher levels of care.

The minister said Rwanda would target another 30% reduction in maternal mortality next year.

“Technology will take human care further,” Butera said.

AHTS5 runs through Oct. 2 in Kigali, bringing together health officials, technology companies, researchers, investors and development partners to discuss digital health, artificial intelligence and the development of health systems designed for African communities.