

Rwanda has secured a €25 million (about Rwf 42.055 billion) loan from the French Development Agency (AFD) to strengthen primary healthcare services and support the expansion of the country's specialist medical workforce.

The financing will also help government prepare for the growing number of doctors expected to graduate under the 4×4 medical training programme, an initiative aimed at quadrupling the number of specialist doctors within four years.

Finance and Economic Planning Minister Yusuf Murangwa announced the loan on July 21 while presenting to Parliament a bill seeking approval of the agreement between Rwanda and AFD.

Murangwa said part of the funding will support efforts to attract and retain specialist healthcare workers through the 4×4 programme.

“The second objective of this agreement is to increase the number of specialists working in the health sector, focusing on attracting and retaining specialist healthcare workers through support for the 4×4 programme,” he said.

The loan will support the Ministry of Health's efforts to improve access to quality primary healthcare services for individuals, families and communities.

The funds will be used in areas including maternal and child health, prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, mental health services, nutrition, emergency care, patient referral systems and measures to address health risks linked to climate change.

The agreement provides for repayment over 20 years at an interest rate of 1%, with a five-year grace period before repayments begin.

The financing comes as Rwanda prepares for a sharp rise in the number of specialist doctors entering the health system through the 4×4 programme.

Health Minister Dr Sabin Nsanzimana told lawmakers in May that the first large group of doctors trained under the programme would begin graduating the following year, requiring the government to plan additional resources for their deployment and remuneration.

He cited obstetrics and gynaecology as an example, noting that fewer than 25 specialists graduated annually before the programme, compared with 161 expected

to complete training in the coming year.

Separately, Rwanda has received a Rwf 16.358 billion (\$11.105 million) grant to support pandemic preparedness and response efforts. The funding, supported by international development partners, will help strengthen the country's capacity to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks.