

The University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) on Sunday awarded Rwanda's First Lady, Jeannette Kagame, an honorary doctorate in recognition of her longstanding contribution to public health, education and community welfare in Rwanda, across Africa and globally.

The award was presented on Jan. 25, 2026, during celebrations marking 10 years of UGHE's operations in Rwanda. The ceremony, held at the university's main campus in Butaro, Burera District, also coincided with the graduation of 78 students.

In her remarks, Mrs Kagame described the honor as deeply meaningful and said she received it with humility. She thanked UGHE and the graduating students for their commitment to advancing healthcare, noting that their work and innovations will help strengthen health systems.

"I thank you for the degree you have awarded me, which I receive with humility," she said. "Being recognized in this way is a gift for which I do not have enough words."

She congratulated the graduates, emphasizing their role in addressing health challenges by developing local solutions rather than relying on answers from outside the continent.

"For a long time, solutions in healthcare were sought elsewhere," the First Lady said. "Today, we know that suffering, disease and preventable deaths are not our destiny, and we should not wait for solutions to come from far away."

The graduating class began its studies in 2019 and is the first cohort to receive degrees since the opening of the Butaro campus.

UGHE began operations in Rwanda in 2015 with support from Partners in Health, the global health organization co-founded by Dr. Paul Farmer, who died in 2022.

The First Lady has received multiple international awards recognizing her advocacy for health, education, unity and reconciliation, as well as the empowerment of women and girls. In October 2025, she was honored by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics for her contributions to women's and girls' health. She also received the African Woman of Excellence Award in 2018 for her work supporting women and vulnerable families across Africa.