

Rwanda's Minister of Youth and Arts Development, Dr. Utumatwishima Jean Nepo Abdallah, said Tuesday that youth unemployment remains a challenge despite government programs aimed at creating jobs and improving skills.

Speaking on national television, he said young people aged 16 to 30 make up 27% of Rwanda's population of about 14 million, or roughly four million people.

He said about 52% of young people are employed, while 24% are in school, mostly between the ages of 16 and 25. Another 24% are considered unemployed. Of those, about 14% are actively seeking work, while 10% are not looking for jobs despite being able to work.

"Some young people are ready to work wherever opportunities are available, but others do not show interest in employment," he said, adding that some in the latter group risk turning to illegal activities.

He noted that about 70% of youth live in rural areas and that roughly half have only completed primary education, which he said limits their access to formal employment.

Dr. Utumatwishima said the government is working with the Ministry of Public Service and Labour to link young people to jobs based on their skills and to expand vocational training. He said the goal is for 60% of students to pursue technical and vocational education, while 40% remain in general education.

He also pointed to public works programs introduced in 2021, including rural road maintenance which have created jobs for thousands of young people. He said about 26,700 youth have worked in road maintenance projects, with plans to expand participation.

Another government initiative is involving youth in managing and maintaining rural water supply systems, which is expected to employ about 5,400 young people, as well as supporting them in commercial agriculture to provide sustainable jobs.