



International Labour Day

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Is apprenticeship a solution to youth unemployment?

Labour. Demand for apprentices is high especially for the labour market.

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The ministry of Gender, Labor and social development has placed almost 100 graduate volunteers in more than 20 organisations and more will be placed soon, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development permanent secretary Mr Pius Bigirimana says.

This is under the ministry's graduate volunteer scheme, government's flagship apprenticeship project developed in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Volunteer.

"We wanted to see how we can get graduates to join the work world through volunteering so that they learn skills on

the job," Mr Bigirimana says.

The graduate volunteer scheme takes on people between the age of 18 and 35, with only up to four years after school.

Youths with diplomas and advanced certificates account for 30 per cent, bachelor's degrees at 60 per cent while master's degrees account for 10 per cent as a matter of criteria. Whereas both men and women have equal opportunity, 10 per cent is reserved for persons with disabilities.

"You apply online. There are so many companies that want young people but we are going to be taking them in phases every year. We are going to be having more than 100, absorbing them in industries, business companies, hotels with payment of up to Shs1m," Mr Bigirimana says. The ministry is in talks with the private sector who it believes can play a

huge role to deliver the projects goals. The graduate volunteer scheme offers support to an aspect of the Green Jobs Programme which aims at producing quality apprentices and volunteers.

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"Ministry of education does pedagogy in class. For us, it is work based learning. This apprenticeship is very critical that if we master it, this country will change. Japan, Germany and Australia went through apprenticeship so why should we get masons from China when we have young people who can do that. We should get 80 per cent of the population equipped with skills so you get money," Mr Bigirimana says.



Makerere University graduates celebrate after completing studies. Through the graduate volunteer scheme, government will help the youth to get jobs in different organisations.

PHOTO BY ALEX ESAGALA

The ministry of Gender views the programme as a solution for building capacity of national institutions and partners to create decent employment for working age people between 18 and 35 years. It will put in place a solid policy and legal framework which recognizes volunteerism as an avenue for youth to enhance employability and possibly trigger appetite for self-employment.

The future for the programme seems bright for now as its sustainability has been planned.

"These programmes are sustainable to the extent that we have got committed cadres who are working there. What comes out is what feeds back into the system. Like the Green Jobs programme, money from there is being recycled so it becomes sustainable," Mr Bigirimana says.