

Rwanda's National Forensic Institute (RFI) announced Monday it will establish eight new branches across the country as part of efforts to bring forensic services closer to citizens and strengthen the justice system.

The announcement was made in Nyagatare District during the launch of "*Know RFI*," a nationwide campaign aimed at raising awareness among local leaders and the public about the institute's services.

Dr. Charles Karangwa, RFI's director general, said the expansion aligns with the government's five-year plan to decentralize justice services. He noted the new branches will make it easier for citizens to access forensic expertise while also reducing the risk of evidence being compromised before reaching Kigali.

"The Government of Rwanda instructed us to set up branches across the country to ease the burden on citizens and support partners like RIB," Karangwa said. "This will reduce cases where evidence from remote areas takes too long to reach us or risks losing its authenticity."

The branches will be opened in Nyagatare, Kirehe, Rwamagana, Huye, Rusizi, Rubavu and Musanze districts, with Rusizi hosting two due to its size and geography, including one in Gihundwe. Additional offices will be established at Kigali's Kanombe International Airport and Bugesera International Airport.

Karangwa said implementation will begin soon. "We have already drafted cooperation agreements with partners. Once they are finalized, we will immediately prepare to roll out the new branches," he said.



Local officials and community members welcomed the initiative, saying it would improve access to justice in rural areas. Alice Mutoni of Nyagatare said the local branch will save residents long trips to Kigali in search of forensic services.

"Many people were not even aware of the services RFI provides. Now they will know and benefit," Mutoni said.

Benjamin Ruhumuriza, executive secretary of Karushuga Cell in Rwimiyaga Sector, said the expansion will also help preserve the integrity of investigations. "We used to face challenges where crimes occurred and evidence was tampered with, but now they will be able to detect such cases quickly," he said.

In addition to expanding nationwide, RFI is preparing to extend its services beyond Rwanda. Karangwa said 12 African countries have already expressed interest in collaborating with the institute to bring forensic expertise closer to their populations.

The institute provides forensic science services to support the justice system, including the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence in criminal investigations. Officials say decentralizing operations will strengthen the country's ability to investigate crimes while reinforcing public trust in law enforcement and judicial processes.