Rwanda Forensic Institute introduces early DNA testing on six-week pregnancies to help speed up justice for adolescent abuse survivors.

The Rwanda Forensic Institute (RFI) will soon begin conducting DNA tests on pregnancies as early as six weeks in adolescent girls who have been sexually abused, a move aimed at identifying perpetrators faster and delivering timely justice.

The announcement was made by RFI Director General Dr. Charles Karangwa during the “Understand RFI 2025” public awareness campaign, held in five districts of the Eastern Province. The initiative engages local leaders to learn about forensic services and relay them to communities.

Previously, investigations into pregnancies resulting from child sexual abuse required waiting 12 weeks either to allow for possible medical termination, if approved, or until after birth to test the newborn’s DNA.

Dr. Karangwa said new technology now enables DNA testing from the mother’s blood at six weeks, allowing authorities to determine the father much sooner.

“Early next year we will start using this method,” he said. “Testing DNA from a pregnant girl’s blood will help identify perpetrators and fast-track justice.”

He urged the public to use RFI’s services to preserve evidence and avoid lengthy court delays, emphasizing the institute’s mission to ensure timely access to justice for victims.

The initiative is part of RFI’s broader expansion plan, which will see branches opened in Nyagatare, Kirehe, Rwamagana, Huye, Rusizi, Rubavu, and Musanze districts, with two branches in Rusizi due to its geography. Additional facilities will also be established at Kigali and Bugesera international airports.