

The Rwanda Forensic Institute (RFI) has announced that it has processed and submitted over 50,000 forensic reports in the past three years, underscoring the increasing demand for forensic services in the country and beyond.

Dr. Charles Karangwa, the Director General of RFI, revealed this during an interview on Rwanda Broadcasting Agency's (RBA) "Waramutse Rwanda" talk show on Monday, September 23, 2024. He emphasized the pivotal role RFI has played in Rwanda's justice system, stating, "We have processed and submitted over 50,000 up-to-date reports during the first phase of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) period."

Advanced Digital Forensics Capabilities

Dr. Karangwa highlighted the institute's expertise in recovering digital evidence, including deleted messages from social media platforms such as WhatsApp. He cited a recent case involving a woman who was sentenced to eight years in prison for selling her relatives' property while they were abroad. Her lawyer consulted RFI to explore the possibility of retrieving deleted messages, which proved crucial in the case. "We informed the lawyer that it was possible to recover the messages, and thanks to the evidence we obtained from WhatsApp, the court ruled in her favor. Today, she is free," he said.



Dr. Charles Karangwa, the Director General of RFI

Growing Regional Demand for RFI's Services

RFI's reputation for delivering reliable forensic services has attracted attention from other African nations. Dr. Karangwa noted that Rwanda's Ministry of Justice has received 12 formal requests from various African countries, including Botswana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, and Guinea Conakry, seeking RFI's expertise. "One of the things that pleases us is the increasing willingness of individuals—lawyers, judges, and others in the legal field—to seek forensic evidence for their cases," he added.

He also mentioned ongoing efforts to introduce legislation that will mandate the use of technology-based evidence in court proceedings, further solidifying the importance of RFI's services.

High-Profile Case Solved with Forensic Evidence

Dr. Karangwa shared another example of RFI's impact on the justice system, involving a tragic case where a man killed his own child. The forensic evidence collected by RFI played a key role in securing justice for the victim.

A Growing Institution

Established in 2016 as an independent entity under the Ministry of Justice, the Rwanda Forensic Institute officially began offering its services to the judiciary, private sector, and the general public in 2018. The institute is equipped with cutting-edge technology and staffed by professionals skilled in various forensic disciplines, including forensic pathology, digital forensics, fingerprint analysis, drug and chemical analysis, document examination, and forensic toxicology.

Since its inception, RFI has experienced significant growth. Initially, the institute handled only two to five clients per day. Today, it serves over 100 clients daily. RFI's services are also priced to be accessible, with DNA tests available for 89,010 Rwandan francs.

Hosting the African Forensic Science Conference

From September 23 to 28, 2024, Rwanda will host the African Forensic Science Association (AFSA) conference, a key event that brings together forensic science professionals and institutions from across the continent. The conference will focus on the role of forensic science and technology in improving justice systems throughout Africa.

As RFI continues to expand its capabilities and reach, it remains a vital player in the administration of justice in Rwanda and an emerging leader in forensic services across the African continent.