Six exceptionally gifted Rwandan students are among the first cohort of 30 learners selected from eight African countries to receive fully funded scholarships at the newly established Africa Olympiad Academy (AOA), a premier institution dedicated to nurturing the continent's brightest minds in mathematics, science, and advanced problem-solving.

The world-class residential high school, based in Kanombe, Kigali, was officially launched on November 19, 2025. Designed to become a hub of academic excellence, the academy brings together talented students from Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa—future innovators expected to drive Africa's socio-economic transformation.

"We ran a national competition involving 50,000 students from 900 secondary schools across the eight countries. The students competed, and the top talent was selected," said Arun Shanmuganathan, AOA co-founder and executive director.

He noted that there are plans to tap into other African countries next year.

Arun Shanmuganathan, Co-founder and Executive Director of AOA

With the academy's 'Rising Star' initiative, the target is to find and nurture Africa's most promising young minds in mathematics and science. It will also incorporate Olympiad competitions, camps, and targeted training designed to detect talent earlier and connect them to learning resources.

Within three years, students will graduate with A-levels from Cambridge, from the Cambridge system, which will prepare them to compete on the global stage and then be able to attend top universities globally.

"They'll also graduate with a high school certificate from the African American Academy, a school that is accredited by the National Examination and School Inspectorate Authority (NESA)." He added.

Sonia Keza, 17, is one of the Rwandans selected. She revealed how she started her Olympiad journey when she was a senior, about three years ago. She later heard about the African Olympiad Academy and the scholarship opportunity and started the application and competition process.

“At my school, we didn’t really get much time to focus on Olympiad math. And I realized that the problem was not that Rwandans or Africans in general are not talented, but rather that we don’t get the opportunity to train our minds,” she shared.

She believes that the initiative will nurture her and enable her to build up solutions for Rwanda’s problems and Africa in general.

Similarly, Prince Phenyo Sokwe, a student from Botswana, also looks to grasp a series of knowledge in coding and physics, which will help him stand competent continentally and internationally.

“I aspire to bring the ideas to my community. I’m hoping to solve a lot of problems with all the knowledge I gain. Also, there are so many opportunities I can think of.” He said.

When officially launching the academy, Eraste Rurangwa, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of ICT, said that the academy aligns perfectly with Rwanda’s belief that the greatest untapped resource is not underground but in the minds of young people.

“We are eager to explore strong cooperation with the African Olympiad Academy, not only to support your scholars but also to find ways to scale the effective methodologies that inspire science, technology, and mathematics,” he said.

He added that Rwanda looks forward to building a nation whose potential is limited only by imagination, not by opportunity.

Training a Generation of AI Experts.

Throughout rigorous training in STEM and computer science, the African Olympia Academy will incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help Africa step forward. With regard, the alumni will be the next generation of AI talent in strategic areas of the economy.

While data show that AI can significantly improve Africa’s economy and add up to $2.9 by 2030, gaps remain evident, although optimism is high.

According to Gaid Faraj, the co-founder and head of AOA, AI is regarded as a strong tool in mathematics that will help the alumni with solving complex problems.

“We are trying to train the next generation so Africa can lead and not just have to cut and paste from the West. There is a lot of information and research out there about how AI is biased. So, we need to have people who are writing theorems and developing new algorithms using AI technology.” He shared.

Abadiofon Otobong Sampson, another student from Nigeria, optimistically believes with knowledge about AI, she will be able to create an AI-empowered solution that can bridge the gap that Africa technically has with the Internet.