

On Monday, UNICEF Rwanda launched a partnership with the Hempel Foundation aimed at strengthening primary education in the country. The announcement coincided with the start of the *Africa Foundational Learning Exchange 2024*, a three-day conference focused on improving primary education across Africa.

The partnership seeks to address gaps in primary education by supporting children in their first three years of schooling, which are critical for building a strong educational foundation. This initiative is particularly focused on countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where ensuring children receive quality early education can pave the way for better performance in later stages of learning.

Julianna Lindsey, UNICEF Rwanda's Country Representative, highlighted the importance of primary education as the foundation for all future learning. She emphasized that when children miss out on proper foundational education, they face significant challenges, including grade repetition and dropping out of school. "Primary education is the backbone of future learning. Without it, children are at greater risk of falling behind and leaving school prematurely," she said.

The project will run for three years, targeting 150 schools in five districts—Gakenke, Ngororero, Rusizi, Karongi, and Gisagara—which have the highest rates of school absenteeism and dropout. The initiative will focus on providing extra support to children who struggle to keep up with their peers. Teachers will receive specialized training and resources to better support these students, including additional learning hours each week.

Anders Holm, Executive Director of the Hempel Foundation, stressed the foundation's commitment to helping the Rwandan government meet its educational goals, particularly for children with learning difficulties. "This partnership is about ensuring all children, regardless of their background, have access to quality primary education," he said.

The collaboration is expected to contribute significantly to improving primary education outcomes in Rwanda, offering new opportunities for children and teachers alike.