

Why La Francophonie is sending 100 French teachers to Rwanda

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The first cohort of 25 teachers of the French language to arrive in Rwanda has been undergoing a week-long orientation programme before they are dispatched to schools. Under the OIF's Mobility Project, 70 more teachers are expected in the country. / Photo : Dan Nsengiyumva.

The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) plans to send up to 100 teachers to Rwanda over the next two years under a project aimed at enhancing French language teaching among its member states.

The revelation was made on Friday, October 16, few days after the first group of 25 volunteer teachers arrived in Kigali from 12 French-speaking countries on a mission to boost the teaching of French language in Rwandan primary and secondary schools.

Under the "mobility project", OIF recruits and sends teachers of French to its member countries which expressed the need to boost the language's position in the community.

"The Ministry of Education expressed the will to have more teachers," said Iyade Khalaf, the project manager at OIF in an exclusive interview with *The New Times*.

"Now we are in the experimentation of the first group of the 25 to see what the results are, what we can improve... we aim at sending 70 more people."

He said that Rwanda was the first to receive the teachers, reiterating that the country has big ambitions to build a multilingual education system.

"Basically, the project aims at responding to the needs of the Ministry of Education in the field of the French language teaching and learning," he said, signalling Rwanda's 'political will' to restore the position of French in its language policy.



Iyade Khalaf, the leader of the OIF Teacher Mobility Project. Photo : Dan Nsengiyumva.

The expat teachers who are already in the country come from Benin, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Guinea, Togo and France.

At school reopening expected in November, they will be deployed to schools in different parts of the country, with the majority placed in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs).

For a period of two years (one year, renewable),

they will both teach French to students and train fellow teachers.

“[The mobility programme] is one of the main projects that is carried out by our organization and the new team who you know is run by Louise Mushikiwabo.”

Mushikiwabo, a former Rwandan foreign minister, was elected the OIF Secretary General in 2018 for a four-year term at the helm of the multinational body.

Next year, the project will be expanded to more countries including Ghana, Madagascar, Guinea Conakry and Lebanon.

In Rwanda, the initiative is implemented by La Francophonie in partnership with the Ministry of Education through Rwanda Education Board.

Before the teachers go to classes, they embarked on a week of orientation and training workshops on the educational and sociolinguistic context of Rwanda, and exchanges of practice on the teaching of French as a foreign language in a school context.

The training ended on Friday, October 16.

They were also trained on digital literacy which remains vital in Rwandan schools especially in a Covid-19 era which dictated the adoption of remote learning as a result of government measures to curb virus in-

fections.

“The general goal goes beyond the French teaching. It’s in line with the priorities of the Rwandan government which is to implement multilingual education. It’s part of the vision of education in Rwanda to train future multilingual professionals.”

Accompanied by the expertise of the OIF, Rwanda will develop a national plan for teaching and learning French, linked to the country’s education sector strategy.

Regional integration

Khalaf noted that revitalizing the French language could foster the development of economic integration of Rwanda within the region.

“Rwanda has quite some neighbouring French speaking countries. So when you know French language, it gives you more professional opportunities to work with these countries,” he said.

He added “there is this will of Rwandan authorities to reinforce the teaching and use of French. There is already a political wish to make again the French language a priority on the same level as English.”

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