

Speech: Head of DFID Rwanda writes a blog on World Teacher's Day

In October 2008, Rwanda switched from the use of French to English as a medium of instruction at all levels of education. This presented challenges, as many learners in primary level and beyond did not have sufficient ability in English to achieve grade appropriate subject knowledge, restricting learners' access to effective classroom practice and thus, the curriculum.

Building Learning Foundations aims to address this challenge and is the main technical assistance component of the UK Aid-funded Learning for All (LFA) programme in Rwanda.

The three- and half-year programme aims to improve learning outcomes in English and Mathematics in lower primary grades in all of Rwanda's government schools including those learners with special education needs. The programme is set up as follows:

- Foundation 1: Improving learning outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching of English and Mathematics at lower primary level (P1 to P3).
- Foundation 2: Leadership for learning strengthens learning by transforming head teachers' practice through a system of coaching and academically-accredited work place-based continuous Professional Development courses.
- Foundation 3: Improving and consolidating of National, District, Sector and school-level management systems.

Jo Lomas, British High Commissioner to Rwanda, presents an English toolkit to the head teacher of Kagugu Primary school at the BLF launch.

In only 12 months, BLF has reached over 20,000 English and Mathematics teachers from 20 districts out of 30, and provided them each with self-study toolkits. The toolkits consist of printed books with supporting audio-visual materials on removable media cards for use on teachers' own mobile phones, and two smartphones for each school so that teachers can watch the instructional videos and film their own classes for self-reflection and peer discussion.

Elie Masengesho a P2 English teacher at Kibara Primary school said:

Through BLF I have managed to gain solid skills of making my English class quite interesting and fun. These days, pupils do not miss my class because they learn something different in each lesson.

The programme was officially launched in March this year by Jo Lomas, the British High Commissioner to Rwanda, alongside the State Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Dr Isaac Munyakazi.

Zacharie Nkundimfura, Head Teacher of GS Shyorongi said:

Being a national leader of learning is rewarding. I have been able to work with my fellow head teachers in my district and for the first time we all have developed school direction plans. I learn something new from my colleagues each time we meet in a Professional Learning Community. I feel I am making positive change in my community.

Building Learning Foundations programme targets 2.6 million children in lower primary grades, 25,000 English and Mathematics teachers in P1-P3, 2,500 Head Teachers, 2,500 Chairpersons of School General Assembly Committees, 830 mentor trainers as well as all Education officials at sector and district levels.

This innovative programme costs £25 million and is implemented by a consortium of British not-for-profit organisation ie, Education Development Trust, British Council and VSO.