



Rhineland-Palatinate - Rwanda partnership

In 1982, Rhineland-Palatinate and the Republic of Rwanda sealed through an exchange of letters between the two governments the first partnership between a German federal state and an African country. From the beginning, the basic idea was to develop a so-called grassroots partnership, which should be decentralized and in touch with the people. The Rwandan partners autonomously propose projects ideas which they consider most urgent and necessary. On Rhineland-Palatinate's side, the partners strive to provide the financial and material support.

The primary objectives include the improvement of education, the support of women as well as of the fields of health care and environment protection. More than 220 school partnerships contribute to soundly improve the school situation in Rwanda. Also, the personal contact between children and youngsters as well as between teachers and school management from Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda is encouraged.

Vocational training is another important factor. Only by providing the proper vocational training it is possible to build qualified and skilled workers, which play an extremely important role for the economic development of Rwanda.

A new focus area is engaging people with disabilities to contribute as important players in the partnership and thus help deepen the cooperation between Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda. There are also an increasing number of projects that support renewable energies and environmental protection. Rhineland-Palatinate's economic actors are involved in the partnership to further advance the development in Rwanda.

The partnership has grown tighter also in the fields of arts, culture and sports, which act as a bridge of understanding and foster cooperation between the two partners. Due to the many encounter trips over the past years, particularly young people were able to experience each other's culture and benefit from each other: Children and young people are the basis for the future of the partnership.

The projects are implemented via a co-ordination office in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, - sponsored by the Association Partnership Rhineland-Palatinate (*Partnerschaft Rheinland-Pfalz/Ruanda e.V.*) - in close cooperation with the Committee for Development Cooperation with the Partner Country of Rwanda (Referat Entwicklungszusammenarbeit mit dem Partnerland Ruanda), an initiative of the Rhineland-Palatinate State Ministry of the Interior and for Sport (Ministerium des Innern und für Sport).

The model of decentralized, grassroots and basic need-oriented development cooperation encounters great response and approval in the population. Currently, about 50 initiatives and Ruanda groups within municipalities, cities and counties contribute to the partnership. Also, over 220 schools as well as 49 municipalities and



numerous parishes, clubs, associations, universities and technical universities have built relations with relevant partners in Rwanda.

In addition to the partnership with Rwanda, Rhineland-Palatinate cooperates with numerous non-governmental partners involved in development policy including individuals on the level of municipalities, churches, NGOs and schools. The development programs are directed to private initiatives in Rhineland-Palatinate who carry out development educational and information work or cooperate with partners in developing countries all around the world.

Within Rhineland-Palatinate's government, the Ministry of the Interior and for Sport holds the responsibility for the development policy of the federal state.