

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

RWANDA

COUNTRY BRIEF

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November 2022

Disclaimer

This brief was prepared by the Technical Secretariat. It summarizes the key findings from the situational analysis report and does not necessarily reflect the position of the UNPRPD MPTF.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NCPD	National Council of Persons with Disabilities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NST	National Strategy for Transformation
NUDOR	National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda
OPDs	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
REB	Rwanda Education Board
RNADW	Rwanda National Association of Deaf Women
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UNPRPD	United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VUP	Vision Umurenge Program

1 BACKGROUND

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF) is a unique partnership that brings together United Nations (UN) entities, governments, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), and broader civil society to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the country level around the world.

The UN entities participating in UNPRPD are ILO, OHCHR, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO. Other UNPRPD members include the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). The main contributors to the UNPRPD MPTF are Australia, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In 2020, with the Strategic and Operational Framework 2020-2025 UNPRPD adopted a new programme design approach. The Framework moves towards proactive, results-oriented joint programming to drive implementation of the CRPD and disability-inclusive SDGs.

In the same year, the UNPRPD launched its fourth funding call and invited UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to submit proposals for joint country-level programmes with the objectives of advancing CRPD implementation and improving the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs. The 26 selected teams (see Annex 1) were then allocated an initial budget to deliver an induction training, conduct a country situational analysis and complete a full joint programme proposal based on the findings of the situational analysis.

The 26 countries each conducted a comprehensive multistakeholder situational analysis to identify gaps and opportunities around preconditions to CRPD implementation and agree on a set of recommendations to address them.

From March to May 2021, the UNCT in Rwanda conducted the comprehensive situational analysis. The methodology included a desk review of relevant literature, key informant interviews and focus groups, stakeholder mapping exercises, and consultative workshops with key stakeholders.

The full situational analysis report can be found [here](#).

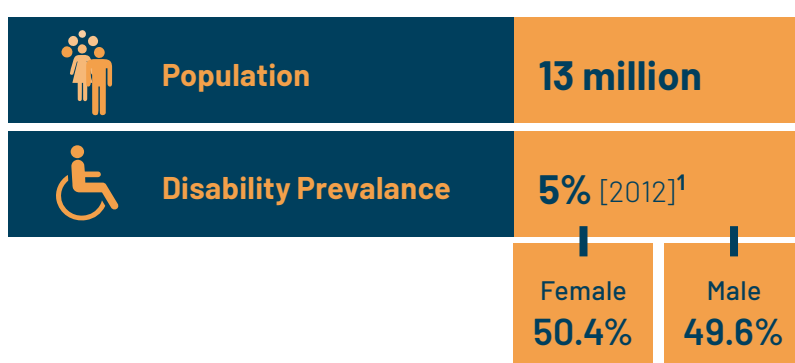
2 WHY A COUNTRY ANALYSIS?

Many countries still struggle to transform the CRPD into concrete policies, systems, programmes and services that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. It is urgent that governments and their implementation partners deliver on their SDG commitments through CRPD-compliant interventions. To support countries in the most catalytic way requires understanding the main bottlenecks and priorities in each country in relation to the fulfilment of the CRPD. We needed to know who the key stakeholders are, how implementation/monitoring mechanisms are functioning (or not), which capacities stakeholders may need to improve, and which ongoing development processes could be leveraged to become more disability inclusive.

The situation analyses were designed to:

- Inform the design of future PRPD funded programmes in the country and serve as a baseline for them;
- Inform UNCTs of gaps in achieving disability inclusion in ongoing national processes and programmes and recommend further, in-depth analysis where needed;
- Build a base of mutual understanding and working relationships among UN entities, government, OPDs and other civil society organizations, as well as the private sector and academia, as the basis for future co-design of joint programmes;
- Strengthen the capacity of those stakeholders to more effectively include and address the rights of persons with disabilities as outlined in the CRPD; and,
- Serve as an advocacy tool for ODPs and other civil society partners, both national and international.

3 INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY CONTEXT IN RWANDA



The Rwanda Population and Housing Census of 2012 estimated that 446,453 people aged 5 years and above had various types of disabilities. Promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities is engrained in Rwanda's inclusive and sustainable development agenda. Disability and social inclusion are mentioned as key development priorities in the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1, 2017-2024) and other central and local government-level planning documents. Following Rwanda's 2008 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the country has made commendable efforts to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Despite progress to date in this area, challenges remain and require further concerted effort by government and non-government partners. Persons with disabilities still face exclusion from various services and their socioeconomic status and standards of living remain far below the national average. A recent study by UNDP Rwanda indicated that persons with disabilities are more socio-economically disadvantaged than those without disabilities. The challenges standing in the way of disability inclusion in Rwanda include: low levels of economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, many of whom find it difficult to access and maintain paid employment and/or access finance for business; low levels of access to information, which results mainly from limited knowledge and use of sign language and braille in various services; limited knowledge and awareness of disability-related policies and rights; lack of disability-disaggregated data that constrains evidence-based programming to advance disability-inclusion; and incomplete implementation of certain provisions of laws and policies meant to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Stakeholder coordination mechanisms

The key stakeholders responsible for implementing and monitoring the CRPD are highlighted below. A full list of stakeholders is included in the full report.

Government

- **National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)** was established in 2011 and is made up of government representatives. It works at the national as well as the local level through district, sector and cell administrative units. Each of the 30 districts across the country has staff who ensure that disability is mainstreamed across all district development strategies. The sector and cell levels of local government also have representatives on the NCPD Executive Committee responsible for disability mainstreaming at the local and central levels. Additionally, all ministries, the national parliament, and the East African Legislative Assembly have a disability focus person.
- Disability mainstreaming in government is done in consultation among government agencies and between government and OPDs.
- A **disability coordination forum**, composed of the NCPD, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and OPDs, is responsible for coordinating the development, approval and implementation of disability-inclusive policies and programs.

Organizations of persons with disabilities

The **National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda (NUDOR)** is the umbrella OPD. It engages in training and advocacy on the rights of persons with disabilities through its 13 member OPDs that represent various disability categories, ages and gender.

The main roles of OPDs in promoting disability mainstreaming and inclusion include mobilizing and implementing programmes and interventions and training members in internal policies and laws and international commitments to promote disability-inclusive

communities. OPDs also play a key role in advocating for the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities within government and non-government organizations as well as various sectors.

OPDs seek to engage in the policy-making process by remaining up-to-date on policies under review and providing input during the review process. Additionally, persistent advocacy is often required to achieve adoption of recommendations.

UN System

One UN Rwanda has entered into a cooperation framework with the Government of Rwanda that stipulates areas of cooperation between UN agencies and government institutions. With regard to disability inclusion, the NCPD represents the government in partnership arrangements meant to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities with support from the UNCT. Under this framework, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and the UNDP are among the UN agencies that support Rwanda's efforts in advancing disability inclusion. UNICEF also plays a key role in advocating, building systems and supporting inclusion of children with disabilities in national policies and programmes, including at local levels.

Summary of stakeholder coordination analysis

The framework for coordination among government agencies, UNCT and OPDs to promote disability inclusion in Rwanda is expanding. The government is proactively involved in disability mainstreaming and inclusion in various sectors, using the disability mainstreaming guidelines developed by NCPD. OPDs are invited to consultation meetings on specific policies related to persons with disabilities, including on the National Disability Policy and the inclusive education policy. However, consultations are less frequent and, even, minimal regarding matters affecting the entire population, such as the Social Protection Policy and SDG process. During consultations, line ministries often invite NCPD only – and, in some cases, international organizations working towards disability inclusion – to cover the disability inclusion dimension. One UN Rwanda has a cooperation framework with the Government of Rwanda, through which both parties agree on programming priorities at the intervention planning phase prior to implementation. Going forward, coordination should be strengthened, with government and the UNCT consulting OPDs comprehensively at the programme planning stages and involving them actively in monitoring and reporting, especially on disability-related development indicators.

4.2 Preconditions for disability inclusion

In its Strategic Framework, UNPRPD identified five preconditions as foundational elements that must be in place to address the rights of persons with disabilities across sectors. The following findings focus on these preconditions in the Rwandan context.

- 1 **Equality and non-discrimination**
- 2 **Accessibility**
- 3 **Inclusive service delivery**
- 4 **CRPD-compliant budgeting and financial management**
- 5 **Accountability and governance**

Equality and non-discrimination

The Government of Rwanda is committed to an inclusive sustainable development agenda that leaves no one behind, including persons with disabilities. This is engrained in the national policy and legislative frameworks meant to uplift the well-being and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Laws, policies and ministerial orders are in place that establish the rights to which persons with disabilities are entitled and denounce any form of discrimination based on disability. Such policies and laws are detailed in the full report.

Despite the existence of these new policies and laws, implementation is quite limited in many cases, while some pre-existing policies and laws are outdated. Efforts to revise them are underway to ensure that they better reflect the realities of persons with disabilities. For example, provisions in the laws relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in general and the protection of disabled former war combatants are not in line with the CRPD as they date from before Rwanda ratified the Convention. Supported by UNDP, the Rwanda Law Reform Commission is currently working to revise these laws to bring them into compliance with CRPD principles. Furthermore, the national disaster recovery and response strategy does not include special measures to ensure assistance to persons with disabilities during emergency situations.

Discussions with OPDs uncovered experiences of discrimination and violence. At the family level, persons with disabilities are treated unfairly relative to other members without disabilities. In education, children with disabilities receive lower priority in favour of their siblings without disabilities. At the community level, discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities include physical violence, such as beatings, sexual harassment of women with disabilities and denial of employment opportunities even when applicants are allegedly qualified. Children with disabilities are at an even greater risk of exposure to many forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. Discussions with persons with disabilities revealed that, despite legal protections against discrimination and violence, access to justice is still limited due to inability to afford lawyers, communication barriers – for those with visual and hearing impairments and intellectual disabilities – and negative attitudes of some local government and judicial officials.

Key findings

- Coordination and implementation challenges and a low level of knowledge and awareness regarding disability mainstreaming and disability inclusive policy and programming lead to weak implementation of disability inclusion provisions of national laws and policies. For example, the rights to equal access to employment and non-discrimination are not fully enforced.
- Many policies and laws are not disability inclusive and hence lack specialized measures to support persons with disabilities. A comprehensive audit is needed to identify policies and laws that are in critical need of disability mainstreaming.
- Persons with disabilities – especially women – experience high levels of discrimination and violence, including physical, emotional and sexual.

Inclusive service delivery

Disability assessment and referral services

The situational analysis report does not describe the existing assessment and referral system and its strengths and weaknesses. The report refers to the health sector's mandate to assess and decide on an individual's 'type' and 'level' of disability. However, it does not analyse the quality and accessibility of these assessments. It concludes that persons with disabilities whose 'degree of disability' is between 50 and 100 percent are the sole responsibility of the State; for those with a degree of disability between 30 and 49 percent, the State's responsibility falls to 50 percent. Prosthetics and orthotics are free of charge for persons with disabilities, provided that the value of these devices does not exceed the provisions of community-based health insurance. However, the State remains entirely responsible for providing medical care and purchasing drugs for persons whose degree of disability is between 70 and 100 percent. To facilitate this process, each district hospital is meant to provide special services for persons with disabilities.

While these provisions are in place, implementation falls short. The government disability categorization system unlocks access to community-based health insurance for persons with severe and moderate disabilities, but the categorization process has not been completed and disability cards have not yet been fully distributed.

Disability support services

With support from development partners, the Government of Rwanda has, among other initiatives, sought to promote inclusive service delivery, including free health care and insurance for persons with severe disabilities; encouraged families to take care of children with disabilities rather than place them in care centres; recognized sign language for use in meetings, conferences and news broadcasting; and, revised the national curriculum and teacher training to promote inclusive education.

Nonetheless, more efforts are needed to implement the provisions of policies and laws. For example, although sign language is recognized by law for use in meetings, conferences and news broadcasts, it is not always provided and monitoring is required to ensure compliance. Access to information for persons with various types of disabilities should also be monitored. Offering training to service providers for persons with disabilities and

raising their awareness of the rights and special needs of persons with different disability types could further improve the quality of services. Rather than continuing to focus only on special needs education, inclusive education should receive greater priority as the first option for every child. This could be facilitated by providing necessary teaching tools and materials and building capacity of teachers in mainstream schools.

In summary, provisions in policies and laws that protect equal rights for persons with disabilities are not implemented or operationalized.

Mainstream services

National laws and policies include provisions to ensure that service delivery is inclusive of persons with disabilities to the extent possible. Efforts are underway to harmonize national laws with the CRPD and SDGs, while the disability mainstreaming guidelines inform mainstreaming across sectors. SDGs, including those related to disability, have been integrated in the country's Vision 2050, NST1 (2017-2024) and the Social Protection Sector Strategy (2018-2024).

The situational analysis report provides an overview of the outcomes to date in the areas of social protection, education, health, employment and access to justice. These brief highlights key gaps. Further details may be found in the full report.

Health

The Government of Rwanda has sought to promote inclusive service delivery, including free health care and insurance for persons with severe disabilities. However, such delivery is still limited. For example, the community-based health insurance scheme does not cover certain specialized health services, medicines and assistive devices.

Education

The Ministry of Education promotes inclusive education to ensure access to quality education for students with disabilities under the Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education Policy. This has led to the integration of inclusive education modules in pre- and in-service teacher training centres; the development of a referral system; and the development of accessible digital textbooks. Other efforts to promote inclusive education include the Rwanda Education Board's (REB) revision of the national curriculum to emphasize competency-based inclusive education; training of teachers in sign language and inclusive education; and appointment of a special needs education coordinator at the Ministry of Education to guide teachers in offering inclusive education to learners with disabilities. Additionally, REB designated 89 master trainers to train over 2,000 primary school teachers in inclusive education. Still, outcomes are meagre in terms of individual adaptation of curriculum and teaching methods, leading to poor retention rates and educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Because of this, many stakeholders (including parents and OPDs) prefer that special education systems be maintained until the mainstream system has sufficient capacity.

Social protection/employment

Limited empowerment of persons with disabilities leads to lower levels of labour market participation. Most survive by engaging in the informal sector or accessing grants from

social protection programmes. The recruitment processes of many government agencies, private sector and INGO/NGOs are not transparent and applicants with disabilities either do not receive special support during interviews or are automatically disqualified without due assessment of their capabilities. In addition, the concept of reasonable accommodation is poorly understood. Further, discussions with persons with disabilities revealed that, despite legal protections against discrimination and violence, access to justice is still limited due to inability to afford lawyers, communication barriers (for those with visual and hearing impairments and intellectual disabilities) and negative attitudes of some local government and judicial officials.

Key findings

- The concept of inclusive service delivery is understood and adopted only a limited basis within most sectors. Segregated solutions are still the norm.
- Inclusive access to justice is limited due to a combination of inability to afford legal representation, limited awareness of justice institutions, neglect by local government and judicial officials, and communication barriers.
- Social protection programs are not adequately disability inclusive; programs like the Vision Umurenge Program (VUP), one-cow-per-poor-household (girinka) and the Mutuelle de Santé currently target the population in poverty overall, without specific emphasis on poor persons with disabilities.

Accessibility

The 2015 Building Code establishes the right of persons with disabilities to physical access to buildings. The Code grants construction permits based on an elaborate plan to establish accessible facilities in buildings. However, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Rwanda Housing Authority need to strengthen their monitoring of these legal provisions. Many buildings (even those constructed after 2015) do not comply with the accessibility standards stipulated in the Code. Persons with disabilities still face challenges accessing the premises of government institutions, UN agencies, development partners, private sector companies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and public places, such as taxi parks. The challenges of physical accessibility are further constrained by limited access to accessible information. Key information from governmental and development agencies is published using conventional methods that are inaccessible to persons with disabilities (for example, sign language interpretation and easy-to-read, braille or audio versions are not available).

Key findings

- Persons with disabilities have a limited access to information as official documents, news reports, conferences, job adverts and other important information from government and non-government actors are published, broadcast or held in conventional formats (written and verbal).
- Physical accessibility to public spaces and offices of government and NGO is limited as most do not comply with CRPD accessibility requirements/standards.

CRPD compliant budgeting and financial management

Financial planning and monitoring

Rwanda has established institutional mechanisms such as the NCPD and the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and monitor implementation of the government's disability commitments, including implementation of the CRPD. Both institutions receive annual budgets to conduct monitoring related to the rights of persons with disabilities and address some barriers to the full enjoyment of the human rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Local Government has a budget for disability mainstreaming and advocacy, which is disbursed through the NCPD. However, budget allocations are meant to support the administrative operations of NCPD, but no funds are earmarked to directly support persons with disabilities. Under the social protection sector, efforts to alleviate poverty include the VUP, meant to uplift vulnerable groups from poverty. However, the challenge of this and other social protection programmes is that they currently do not set aside separate funds for persons with disabilities. Under this framework, other marginalized groups, including women, children and youth, tend to be prioritized above persons with disabilities. Take, for example, the Budget Framework Paper 2019/2020-2020/2021, which has specific budget allocations to help create jobs for women, without specific funds set aside to create/promote jobs for persons with disabilities. This is further complicated by the general funding limitations specific to the majority of government programmes.

Regulation and support for the additional costs of disability

An examination of budget allocations by sector reveals that limited funds are devoted to service delivery specifically targeting persons with disabilities. The full report shows the budget allocations for the health, social protection and local governance sectors, based on national budget laws and budget execution reports for fiscal years 2017/2018-2019/2020. These figures indicate that allocations to disability-specialized services have fallen substantially since 2018. More disability-earmarked budgeting is required to facilitate interventions that directly uplift the well-being and promote the rights of persons with different types of disabilities.

Key findings

- National programming processes increasingly recognize and reflect the needs of persons with disabilities. However, budget allocations are still relatively small. In most other sectors and development programme, no efforts are made to disaggregate programmes and budgets by disability.
- Analysis of the national finance laws reveals that funding for disability-related services has been declining since 2018 and many sectors (for example, education) lack a separate budget explicitly allocated to disability inclusion.

Accountability and governance

Inclusive evidence and data gathering systems

Gradual progress is being made in collecting and using disability-disaggregated data as a joint partnership of government and development partners. With the support of UN Women, the Rwanda Investigation Bureau started collecting disability-disaggregated data on gender-based violence at the Isange One Stop Centre. UNFPA also supported the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda to include a disability module in the 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey, which was released in mid-2021. The survey used some Washington Group questions, but did not use the formal language of the question set. NCPD has thus advocated for the full incorporation of the Washington Group methodology in the 2022 population and housing census. Many sectors still lack disability-disaggregated data, which constrains planning for the effective delivery of services for persons with disabilities. The Gender Monitoring Office monitors gender-related issues but does not focus specifically on the rights of women with disabilities. NCPD has developed a comprehensive Disability Management Information System (DMIS) that collects and manages disability data and information, based fully on the Washington Group Questions. The system, which includes a case management module, has been piloted in two districts and is set to be rolled out nationally by 2023 but faces funding constraints.

National accountability mechanisms

Disability is considered a human rights issue. The NCHR reports on this periodically, using the reporting systems developed by NCPD. Commonly reported indicators in the education sector include the number of children with disabilities enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education; number of disability-accessible classrooms; and number of teachers with disabilities. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) takes the lead on SDG reporting. This is a commitment to the international community. The NCPD and OPDs are still minimally involved in the SDG planning and monitoring. Placing an SDG advisor at NCPD to collect disability-related SDG achievements and report to MINECOFIN for overall reporting on all SDGs in general would improve governance and accountability.

NCPD's development of disability indicators is one of the key successes in promoting accountability. These indicators are used to report on various outcomes for persons with disabilities in selected sectors, such as education and health. However, greater effort is needed to develop and report on disability-related indicators in all governmental sectors and to improve the collection of disability-disaggregated data in all development and humanitarian plans and monitoring mechanisms.

Discussions with persons with disabilities revealed that their participation in political life is minimal as a result of negative attitudes and stereotypes embedded in the community regarding disability discourage voting for candidates with disabilities. In addition, a clause in the national constitution bars persons with mental health disabilities from competing for elected and decision-making positions even during periods when their disabilities are relatively stable. Accountability and governance in disaster risk reduction and response measures also need to be strengthened, as the National Strategy for Disaster

Risk Reduction lacks special measures to ensure assistance to persons with disabilities during emergency situations. With regards to COVID-19, OPDs are not represented in the national COVID-19 recovery task force. Recovery efforts thus focus mainly on businesses, without specific measures to support businesses owned by persons with disabilities that were affected by the pandemic.

Key findings

- Lack of disability-disaggregated data in various sectors impedes evidence-based strategies to promote disability inclusion.
- There is no independent body charged with routine monitoring to ensure compliance with the rights of persons with disabilities. With regards to gender, the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) conducts monitoring, but does not focus specifically on the rights of women with disabilities. Although the NHRC reports on human rights violation in general, including the rights of persons with disabilities, OPDs believe that the lack of a separate disability entity, as has been established for gender, limits monitoring performance.

4.3 Cross-cutting approaches: Participation, gender, inequalities

The UNPRPD has adopted three cross-cutting approaches to be intrinsically applied across all of UNPRPD MPTF's work, including its structures, programmes, and processes to ensure full and meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities.



Participation:

Enabling full and effective participation of persons with disabilities



Inequalities:

Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities



Gender:

Addressing gender inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities

Participation

Low participation of OPDs in policy-making processes may be explained by limited voice and technical capacity of OPDs, as well as limited disability-inclusive consultation by government. However, OPDs' capacity is increasing and together, through their umbrella body, NUDOR, they are increasingly advocating for participatory leadership. Significant challenges remain on the participation of children's disabilities with limited opportunities for amplification of their voices in all spheres of life.

Gender

Women with disabilities face specific difficulties in accessing services, access to justice and making their voice heard. Despite the creation of two stand-alone OPDs – the Rwandan Organization of Women with Disabilities and the Rwanda National Association of Deaf Women – further progress is needed.

The GMO takes a gender approach to monitoring, but does not emphasize the rights of women with disabilities.

Inequalities

Discussions with NUDOR revealed that certain groups of persons with disabilities are quite marginalized and voiceless, particularly those that fall under the 'Other' category of disability. Additionally, very limited information is available regarding individuals with multiple disabilities and intellectual disabilities and their challenges are less understood. NUDOR is currently advocating for a more accurate definition of the 'Other' category.

4.4 Disability inclusion in broader development, humanitarian and emergency contexts

National development plans

Rwanda has adopted and integrated the SDGs into national planning documents, notably Vision 2050 and NST1, under overall coordination of the MINECOFIN. The country also submitted its first voluntary national review in 2019.

Multiple efforts have been made to ensure that disability inclusion is a visible component of SDG plans and indicators, including by integrating them into Vision 2050, NST1 and district development strategies. An SDG task force comprising government, development partners, CSOs and the private sector was established as a focal point for stakeholder coordination towards disability inclusion. Discussions with NCPD and NUDOR did not provide conclusive information on ODP representation/participation on the task force; the government asserted that OPDs are represented (as members of the sector working group and as stakeholders in SDGs), while the OPDs claim that they are not represented, informed or consulted.

SDG implementation, monitoring, and reporting will require more inclusive participation by all actors. The MINECOFIN performs this role and there is no concrete plan to invite OPDs to participate. PWDs and OPDs, among others, suggest adopting disability indicators in all sectors and recruiting an advisor at the MINECOFIN in charge of reporting on and monitoring all disability-related SDGs.

Rwanda presented its second Voluntary National Review at the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, which reiterates the “leave no one behind” principle and emphasizes progress for persons with disabilities.² The 2021 Common Country Analysis highlights important findings on persons with disabilities³ and will, hopefully, inform Rwanda’s UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in 2023.

Climate change, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action

No studies have been conducted to date on the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities in Rwanda. However, some indications suggest that climate change and associated extreme weather events impose a disproportionate burden on various aspects of the life of persons with disabilities. Extreme weather events, such as floods, exacerbate the limitations on their mobility, especially in remote areas with poor road networks. Additionally, given that many persons with disabilities have underlying diseases, they are extremely vulnerable to certain extreme weather conditions associated with climate change. Persons with albinism are exposed to a high risk of skin cancer during prolonged droughts and extremely high surface temperatures. The challenges are compounded by the fact that weather forecasts provided by the national meteorological agency are not disability sensitive and thus not understandable, especially to persons with visual and hearing impairments. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources’ National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction is not disability mainstreamed and the national

committee/task force is not disability sensitive or adequately trained in disability inclusion. As a result, there is no comprehensive approach to extend special assistance to persons with disabilities during emergencies.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences for people, communities and national economies. The challenges facing persons with disabilities were compounded, particularly in terms of access to information. Early efforts to contain the pandemic in Rwanda were not disability sensitive. For example, the cabinet resolutions regarding containment measures, including lockdowns and curfews, were not published in disability-inclusive formats. The guidelines were not accessible to all persons with disabilities, resulting in arrests and accusations of violating preventive measures. Additionally, OPDs are not represented on the government's COVID-19 recovery steering committee, which has made limited efforts to initiate special recovery measures for persons with disabilities. The lack of representation is further reflected in disability-insensitive recovery equipment, including handwashing facilities, which many persons with disabilities could not use. During lockdown periods, many persons with disabilities who have underlying chronic health conditions lacked easy access to medication. However, government and non-governmental actors did initiate targeted measures in mid-2020 when this disproportionate burden was recognized. With UN support, persons with disabilities received food distributions and cash transfers. In some cases, these were coupled with business support in terms of start-up funds and equipment, especially to cooperatives of persons with disabilities. To ease the flow of information, Humanity and Inclusion funded an interpreter at the REB to provide sign language interpretation of the material taught on television as part of home learning during the lockdown. The Rwanda National Union of the Deaf translated important government communiques on preventive measures into sign language to ensure inclusive access to health information. With support from UNDP and UNICEF, children with disabilities in residential centres received food and hygiene supplies. Following advocacy efforts by NCPD and NUDOR, persons with disabilities have been prioritized in the national vaccination strategy.

5 CONCLUSIONS

As the world continues to work towards the realization of the SDGs, advancing the rights of marginalized groups and persons with disabilities is of particular importance as they are often the last to be considered. Rwanda's 2008 ratification of the CRPD was followed by various legislative and policy frameworks to initiate and sustain efforts to promote a disability-inclusive development agenda. Nonetheless, several issues related to access to critical services such as education, health, finance, transport and justice require further concerted effort.

The situational analysis report highlights institutional and organizational barriers hindering implementation of the CRPD and SDGs. Although there has been progress at the legal and policy levels, further effort is needed to ensure the implementation of these disability-inclusive policies and laws, strengthen stakeholder coordination, increase OPD participation in policymaking and monitoring platforms and laws, and adopt UNDIS across all UN-supported programs. It is essential to listen to and address OPDs' priorities. This includes increasing access to information, advocacy and awareness-raising, promoting equal access to services (including health, education and justice), and achieving economic empowerment through access to employment and business opportunities and greater representation of all disability types in social protection programs.

Based on the findings of the situational analysis report, the Rwanda UNCT highlighted the overall challenges and, in collaboration with OPODs, developed key recommendations that address these challenges:

Challenge	Recommendation
Low level of participation of OPDs in policy-making and monitoring processes	Ensure that government and UN planning and monitoring processes are more disability inclusive and include OPDs in all planning and monitoring platforms; build OPDs' capacity to contribute meaningfully to policy processes; reconstitute COVID-19 task force to include OPDs; take affirmative action to ensure representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making positions.

Challenge	Recommendation
Not all laws, policies and strategies are disability inclusive and many sectors do not follow CRPD-compliant budgeting. Budget allocations to disability-related services in sectors such as social protection are declining while others, such as education, lack disability-earmarked funds	Continue with legal and policy reforms to be more disability inclusive; specifically ensure disability inclusion is included in the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction; identify sectors that need to be more disability inclusive, adopt disaggregated annual targets and monitoring indicators as well as earmarked budgets for disability-inclusion in all programs.
Coordination and implementation challenges to disability mainstreaming and disability-inclusive policy and programming result in limited implementation of disability-inclusive policies/laws and global principles (CRPD, SDGs)	Build capacities of NCPD and its decentralized structures to improve implementation and monitoring of disability inclusive policies and laws, CRPD and SDGs. Build capacities of OPDs to engage meaningfully. Build capacities of UN to ensure implementation of disability inclusion as outlined in UNDIS across all programmes. Build capacities of government institutions and public service providers to ensure effective disability mainstreaming across all sectors. Improve information sharing and coordinate interventions of all stakeholders to reduce duplication.
Limited inclusive service delivery across various sectors	Build capacity of service providers and institutional framework to offer disability-inclusive services, for example: (i) Health: improve community-based health insurance scheme to include special health services and assistive devices; (ii) Transport: restructure the traffic light system to include audio signals; (iii) Justice: offer free/ subsidized legal representation to PWDs; (iv) Education: equip schools with required materials and build capacity of teachers to facilitate inclusive learning; incorporate inclusive education in teacher training programs; provide teaching assistants in inclusive education classrooms. (v) Social Protection: develop and strengthen disability sensitive and disability focused social protection instruments that respond to rights of persons with disabilities, including tailor made inclusive programmes for children.
Limited physical accessibility and access to information	Improve physical accessibility to public spaces and premises of all service providers by enforcing the Building Code of 2015; improve information flow by providing key information in sign language, braille, audio, and visual formats.

Challenge	Recommendation
Limited economic empowerment opportunities for persons with disabilities	Empower persons with disabilities through training and increased participation in the labour market (by providing reasonable accommodation, transparent recruitment processes and support during interviews and work); build the capacity of private sector companies to ensure disability-inclusive employment; support skills cooperatives of persons with disabilities for self-employment; increase participation of persons with disabilities in social protection programs.
Limited disability-disaggregated data that inhibits evidence-based programming and advocacy for disability inclusion	Collect data and evidence especially related to persons with intellectual disabilities; collect disability-disaggregated data through disability indicators relevant to respective sectors, applying the Washington Group methodology; support implementation of the Disability Management Information System (DMIS) to improve coordination and monitor reporting on disability mainstreaming and inclusion.
Low level of knowledge and awareness of disability inclusion, local policies and laws, and global commitments leading to discrimination, violence, and stigmatization of PWDs	Raise knowledge and awareness of policies, laws, CRPD and SDGs on the rights of persons with disabilities through community sensitization campaigns and media to reduce discrimination, violence, and stigmatization within communities; increase advocacy efforts; build capacities of key public institutions, OPDs and media to address stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

ANNEX 1:

26 SELECTED COUNTRIES

Argentina
Colombia
Guatemala
Panama
Trinidad & Tobago

AMERICAS

Cameroon
DRC
Eswatini
Ghana
Rwanda
Sierra Leone
Tanzania
The Gambia
Tunisia
Zimbabwe

AFRICA

Montenegro
North Macedonia
Republic of Moldova

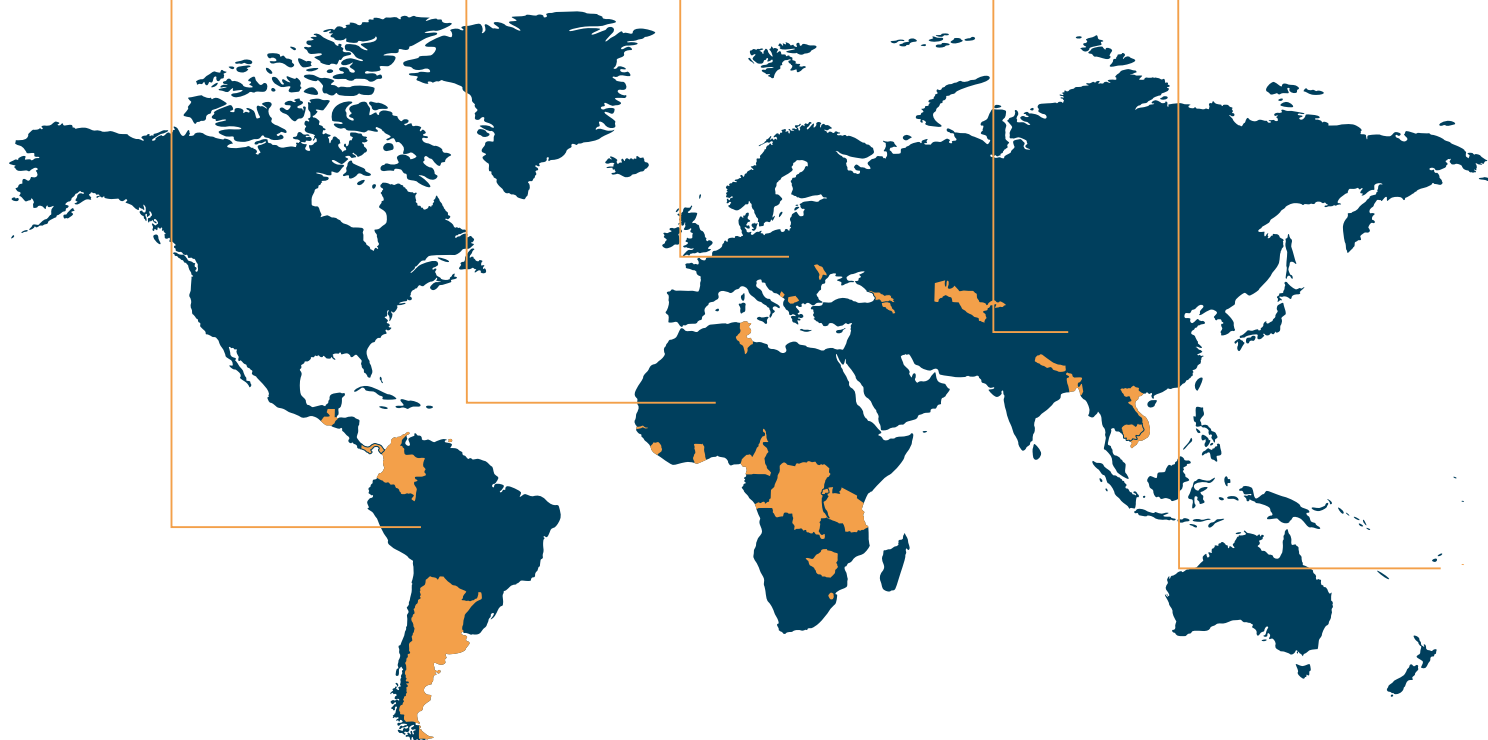
EUROPE

Armenia
Bangladesh
Cambodia
Georgia
Nepal
Uzbekistan
Vietnam

ASIA

Cook Islands

OCEANIA



ENDNOTES

- 1 Rwanda Population and Housing Census of 2012
- 2 <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/rwanda/voluntary-national-review-2019>
- 3 <https://rwanda.un.org/en/191073-rwanda-common-country-analysis-2021>

