

# **D8.6 - Proposal for a National Strategy for Effective Implementation & Monitoring Disability Inclusion in Higher Education**

## **WP8 – SYSTEMIC IMPACT**

### **Task 8.6 – Proposal for a National Strategy for Effective Implementation & Monitoring Disability Inclusion in Higher Education**

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## 1. Introduction

Rwanda's dedication to inclusive education aligns with global and national policies that encompass the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2008), Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2). Despite an improved situation in terms of access to education by learners with disabilities and other special educational needs in primary and secondary school levels, higher education remains characterized by limited access, insufficient support systems, and weak institutional accountability.

This ***National Strategy for Effective Implementation and Monitoring of Disability Inclusion in Higher Education*** is developed under Work Package 8 – Systemic Impact of the ANSWER Project, which focuses on advancing social inclusion and equitable participation of students with disabilities within higher learning institutions. WP8 seeks to strengthen institutional capacities, promote inclusive teaching and learning practices, and establish strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for sustained progress toward disability inclusion.

The strategy, therefore, provides a unified framework to stimulate disability inclusion in higher education through improved policy compliance, institutional change, and monitoring systems. It aims to ensure that every higher learning institution (HLI) in Rwanda provides an inclusive learning environment where students with disabilities and other special educational needs can participate fully and thrive both academically and socially.

## 2. Objectives of this proposal

To achieve the vision of inclusive and equitable higher education, this strategy outlines key objectives that guide the effective implementation and monitoring of disability inclusion across higher learning institutions in Rwanda. These objectives align with national and international commitments and provide a framework for sustainable institutional transformation.

- ✚ Build institutional capacity for higher learning institutions (HLIs) for the roll-out of disability-inclusive policies and practices.
- ✚ Ensure equal access and participation of students with disabilities to all learning and social opportunities.
- ✚ Enforce policy compliance and accountability to national and international inclusion frameworks.
- ✚ Establish effective systems of monitoring and evaluation to trace progress and inform decision-making.
- ✚ Encourage inclusive cultures and attitudes within HLIs to prevent stigma and celebrate diversity.

These objectives are aligned with Work Package 8 of the ANSWER Project, which aims to strengthen disability inclusion and equity in higher education. The strategy translates Rwanda's commitments under the CRPD, SDG4, and NST2 into actionable measures that enhance access, participation, and accountability. It serves as a roadmap for higher learning institutions to institutionalize inclusive practices and ensure that all students can learn, participate, and succeed on equal terms.

### 3. Methodology

Following the identification of stakeholders, a working group comprised of multi-stakeholders was established to facilitate regular consultations and co-ordination of strategy formulation. The group was comprised of both core members and priority members, reflecting diverse expertise and institutional representation.

- **Core members:** the core members included representatives from the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), University of Rwanda, Institute of Applied Sciences Ruhengeri, East African University Rwanda and Uwezo Youth Empowerment.
- **Priority Members:** the priority members were drawn from organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), Teacher training institutions, inclusive education experts, civil

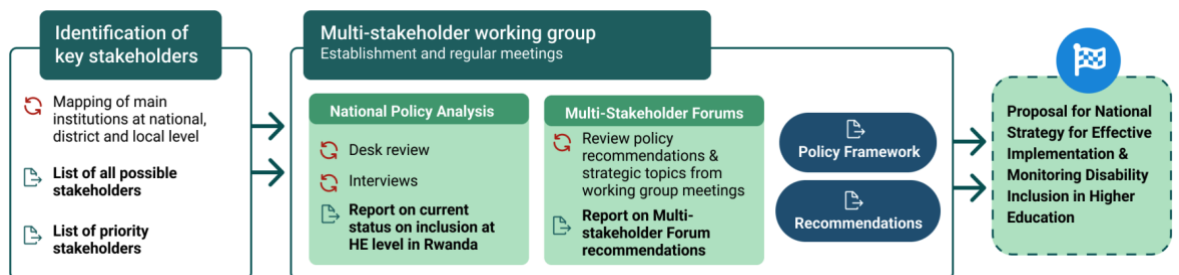
society organisations, and relevant development partners. This inclusive composition ensured that the process captured multiple perspectives and fostered ownership and sustainability of the strategy.

In this situation, two parallel activities were completed:

- 1. National Policy Analysis:** this involved a desk review of the existing policies, discussion with the stakeholders involved, and development of a report to analyse the current situation regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education in Rwanda. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of national policies, strategic plans, and legal instruments was undertaken to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improving disability inclusion across the broader education sector. The analysis also reviewed the alignment of national frameworks with international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2). The full policy analysis document is available on the ANSWER Project website (see Annex 1).
- 2. Multi-Stakeholder Forums:** as part of the participatory approach, a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Disability Inclusion in Education was conducted on March 4, 2025, at Kigali Conference and Exhibition Village under the framework of the ANSWER Project. The forum convened representatives from government institutions, OPDs, academic institutions, teacher training colleges, and civil society organizations. The discussions focused on assessing the implementation status of inclusive education measures and identifying priority actions for the national strategy. To capture diverse views, a questionnaire was developed and administered after the 1<sup>st</sup> forum. This tool aimed to assess perceptions, progress, and recommendations on inclusion measures discussed during the meeting. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> ANSWER Project Multistakeholder Forum held on September 10, 2025, at the University of Rwanda Head Office in Kigali, an overview of the results of the stakeholders' consultation on the inclusion measures discussed during the 1<sup>st</sup> ANSWER Multi-stakeholder Forum was presented. A group dynamic aiming at identifying priority measures to enhance the inclusion and participation of

students with disabilities in higher education was conducted. Participants were divided into six groups; each assigned a specific category. Groups selected the most critical measure in their category and assessed it based on feasibility, implementation duration, and urgency. The results were presented and discussed collectively to determine key actions moving forward. The forums considered policy recommendations and strategic matters arising from working group discussions and developed two reports of the consensus and stakeholders' recommendations.

The outputs from every stream, the policy framework that resulted from the analysis, and the recommendations that emerged through consultations with stakeholders were subsequently merged to inform the development of the ***National strategy for effective implementation and monitoring of disability inclusion in higher education***. By this method, the strategy is guaranteed to be evidence-based, representative, and inclusive, reflecting stakeholders' perceptions at all points in the education system.



## 4. Recommendations

Drawing from the outcomes of the national policy analysis and the multi-stakeholder consultations, the following recommendations are proposed to guide the effective implementation of disability inclusion in higher education in Rwanda. These recommendations aim to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance coordination mechanisms, and ensure equitable access, participation, and success for students with disabilities across all higher learning institutions:

- + **Strengthen policy implementation:** Ensure clear guidelines, accountability, and roles for institutions in putting into full operation existing higher education policies on disability inclusion.
- + **Institutional Capacity Building:** Provide training and assistance to higher education staff and administrators for improved service to students with disabilities & other special educational needs, including inclusive teaching practices and accessible learning material and use of assistive technology.
- + **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework:** Establish a robust framework to regularly monitor, evaluate, and report the level of disability inclusion, using quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- + **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate funding for assistive technologies, accessible infrastructure, and support services to eliminate barriers faced by students with disabilities.
- + **Research and Evidence Generation:** Support research on disability inclusion in higher education to inform policy updates, creative interventions, and evidence-based decision-making.

## 5. Action Plan, Monitoring & Evaluation

To operationalize the National Strategy for Disability Inclusion in Higher Education, an action plan will guide implementation at both national and institutional levels

Key Action	Indicator(s)	Verification means	Incidence	Responsible Institution(s)
1. Review and align higher education policies and strategies with the special needs & inclusive education Inclusive Education Policy	Updated and approved policies disseminated to relevant institutions.	Policy documents, review reports, and meeting minutes.	Annual	MINEDUC, HEC, NCPD

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<p><b>2. Conduct institutional accessibility audits in higher learning institutions.</b></p>	<p>Number of institutions audited, and reports completed.</p>	<p>Audit tools, inspection checklists, and institutional reports.</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>HEC, NCPD MINEDUC Universities</p>
<p><b>3. Build capacity of lecturers and academic staff on inclusive pedagogy and assistive technologies.</b></p>	<p>Number of staff trained; training satisfaction rate.</p>	<p>Training reports, attendance lists, and evaluation forms.</p>	<p>Bi-annual</p>	<p>MINEDUC, UR-CE, EAUR, INES Universities</p>
<p><b>4. Establish and equip disability resource centres in all public universities.</b></p>	<p>Number of functional and equipped centres established.</p>	<p>Site visit reports, records, and photographs.</p>	<p>Annual</p>	<p>HEC, Universities, NCPD</p>
<p><b>5. Develop and operationalize a national database for students with disabilities in higher education.</b></p>	<p>Database established and regularly updated.</p>	<p>Database records, monitoring dashboards, and quarterly updates.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>MINEDUC, HEC, NCPD, NISR</p>
<p><b>6. Strengthen academic, psychosocial, and mentorship support services for students with disabilities.</b></p>	<p>Number of students receiving support and mentorship.</p>	<p>Program reports, student feedback forms, and attendance journals.</p>	<p>Semesterly</p>	<p>Universities, Student Affairs Offices, Student Support Centres</p>
<p><b>7. Conduct national awareness campaigns on inclusive education and rights of students with disabilities.</b></p>	<p>Number of campaigns conducted; level of public engagement.</p>	<p>Media reports, campaign summaries, and attendance lists.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>MINEDUC, NCPD, Media, NGOs</p>
<p><b>8. Monitor and evaluate implementation progress and share results with stakeholders.</b></p>	<p>M&amp;E reports produced, shared, and used for planning.</p>	<p>Monitoring tools, evaluation reports, stakeholder feedback.</p>	<p>Bi-annual</p>	<p>MINEDUC, HEC, NCPD</p>

## 6. Conclusions

The publication of the National Strategy for Disability Inclusion in Higher Education is a critical step towards building a just and inclusive education system in Rwanda. With consensus effort policy assessment, consultations with stakeholders, and evidence-driven planning, the strategy presents a clear roadmap to institutions for removing obstacles and ensuring access by students with disabilities.

Its successful implementation will depend on strong commitment from government agencies, institutions of higher education, organizations of persons with disabilities, and development partners. Ongoing partnership, adequate allocation of resources, and routine monitoring will make quality higher education become completely inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs and potentials of all students.

## 7. Annexes

### **ANNEX 1: Report on status on inclusion at Higher Education level in Rwanda**

This report gives an overview of the status of inclusion in Rwandan higher education, including achievements, challenges, and areas that demand urgent attention. Rwanda has reiterated strong commitments towards inclusive education through various policy initiatives around access and equity.

<https://www.answer-project.eu/resources/d83-report-current-status-inclusion-he-level-rwanda>

## 8. List of acronyms

HEC: Higher Education Council, Rwanda

NISR: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda

UR-CE: University of Rwanda, College of Education