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*Reaching the marginalized*

## **Education for Disabled People in Ethiopia and Rwanda**

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2009

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# **Education for Disabled People in Ethiopia and Rwanda**

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## Abstract

This paper was commissioned in preparation for the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report. It looks at the scale and causes of the educational marginalisation of disabled people in Ethiopia and Rwanda, and reviews selected education policies and plans in relation to disability. The paper provides examples of initiatives for disabled people's education and highlights key issues relating to education for disabled people in Ethiopia and Rwanda, and beyond.

Available statistics indicate that very few disabled children are receiving quality education in Ethiopia and Rwanda, either through inclusive or segregated education, and that provision (especially in special schools) is primarily in urban areas. However, the limitations and unreliability of statistics on disability, especially in relation to education, are also clearly illustrated. It is argued that attention could be given to improving the collection of statistical data, but this should not be either a pre-requisite or a substitute for providing education for disabled people. The paper highlights the lack of information available from the perspective of education beneficiaries in Ethiopia and Rwanda, and the lack of documenting of experience around special needs education and inclusive education. It is suggested that efforts to improve documenting and sharing of existing experience could lead to improvements in the scaling up of successful initiatives in these two countries.

The review of policy and project documentation reveals that both countries are moving forward with a mixture of segregated and inclusive education for disabled learners. In both cases this is a pragmatic move, as special schools have been in existence for several decades and they contain investments that should not be lightly discarded. It is also a move which needs reviewing by policy makers in line with the strong commitments to inclusive education laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Education sector policies are weak in relation to disability, special needs education and inclusive education. There is also limited guidance as to how disabled people fit into the wider 'marginalised' or 'special needs' groups, and how those who are implementing policies can ensure that disabled people are not subsequently sidelined *within* these groups. The specific policies/plans on special needs education provide more clarity and direction than the sector wide documents. Neither Ethiopia nor Rwanda has policies/plans that build on the culture and context of their country. The paper argues that developing education and disability policies in a more culturally appropriate way might make them more easy to understand, accept and implement. International movements such as Education for All are discussed, highlighting their weaknesses around disability issues and the effect this has on national education policy.

Ethiopia and Rwanda can claim achievements in the education of disabled learners, and are moving towards more inclusive education. However, efforts to learn from successful initiatives so that they can be scaled up beyond the current situation of isolated projects is an urgent priority for both countries.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

CBR	community-based rehabilitation
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	education management information system
ESDP III	Third Education Sector Development Program (Ethiopia)
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006–2010 (Rwanda)
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Programme (Ethiopia)
KIE	Kigali Institute of Education (Rwanda)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MINALOC	Ministry of Social Affairs and Local Government (Rwanda)
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education (Rwanda)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SNE	special needs education
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of paper

This paper was commissioned by UNESCO in preparation for the 2010 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report. The terms of reference for the background paper note that it should “provide information on the scale and marginalization of disabled people [in Ethiopia and Rwanda] with respect to education specifically. As well as identifying gaps and inadequacies in policy, it will also highlight promising practical approaches being adopted... drawing lessons for other countries in the region and elsewhere”.

This paper therefore will focus on four main areas:

- summarising statistics relating to the education of disabled people in both countries
- outlining reasons for the marginalisation of disabled people from and within education and society in general
- reviewing education and related policies, to identify how disability is mentioned and prioritised
- providing examples of approaches to education for disabled people.

## 1.2. Key issues

Several important issues – which are by no means unique to Ethiopia and Rwanda – provide a framework for the discussions in this paper.

### **1.2.1. Definitions of key concepts**

Much of the terminology around education for disabled and other marginalised groups has different meanings for different people. There are no universal interpretations for concepts such as special needs education or inclusive education.

Increasingly, inclusive education is being seen as a process of bringing about change in the education system, by identifying and solving barriers to presence, participation and achievement for every learner within mainstream settings. These barriers are within the education system (attitudes, practices, policies, environment and resources) not barriers within the child. However, interpretations that focus solely on disabled learners or that endorse partial segregation within mainstream settings (e.g. via special units or classes) are still common. Similarly, special needs education has been synonymous with education for disabled learners (often in segregated settings). Increasingly, however, it is being recognised that not every disabled person automatically has a special educational need, and that people without impairments can have temporary or ongoing special educational needs. See Appendix 1 for further information on definitions.

The clarity with which policies explain these key concepts affects how well they guide the implementation of education changes. The Ethiopia and Rwanda policies and plans have not been assessed in terms of whether they comply with any particular definition of special needs education or inclusive education. However, the *clarity* of their explanations of key concepts has been analysed.

### **1.2.2. Visibility of disability issues**

Tensions exist regarding the visibility of, and priority given to, disabled people within the concepts of inclusive education and special needs education – particularly when these are interpreted as processes for educating a wide range of marginalised learners. Such processes, in theory, should guarantee that the barriers to participation and learning for disabled and all other learners are addressed. However, there are still concerns that the trend towards using broader definitions of inclusive education and special needs education risks taking the focus away from disabled people’s education.

In light of this issue, it is not sufficient simply to assess whether or to what extent education policies and plans refer to disabled learners. They may discuss ‘learners with special educational needs’ instead. It is therefore important to assess how clearly they explain who these learners are and how the system will identify and challenge any barriers they face. The Ethiopia and Rwanda documents have been reviewed both in terms of *specific references* to disabled learners, and *inferred references* (e.g. through discussions about learners with special educational needs).

### **1.2.3. Guidance for implementers**

“A key issue to emerge from our review of the literature...was the detrimental impact on policy and provision of the confusion in the use of the terms special educational needs and disability.”<sup>1</sup>

If policies and plans lack clarity regarding their interpretation of education concepts, and the position of disabled learners within these concepts, they may not give implementers sufficiently clear guidance for their work. Without a clear explanation of the government’s vision for special needs education or inclusive education, how can an education programme know what actions it needs to take to achieve that vision? The Ethiopia and Rwanda policies and plans have therefore been analysed to see if they offer implementers a sufficiently clear vision to guide their actions.

### **1.2.4. Influence from the international community**

Governments have various international agreements and commitments that – in theory – are guiding their national policy-making and planning processes. However, it may not be safe to assume that they are always being guided in the right direction when it comes to the education of disabled learners. Some international documents, such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education,<sup>2</sup> offer governments relatively specific

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<sup>1</sup> Keil *et al* (2006)

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, 1994

support on this issue. However, compared to more recent and high profile international education commitments – such as EFA – the Salamanca Statement is often under-used by governments. For many governments the EFA goals have been used as a framework for national policies. However, the EFA movement has generally not offered much guidance, support or motivation in relation to education for disabled people. The six EFA goals do not specifically mention disabled learners, despite giving specific attention to girls, children in difficult circumstances, minority ethnic groups, and vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports have also been widely criticised, particularly by the NGO sector and disabled people’s organisations, for not effectively discussing progress and challenges for disabled learners.

In compiling this report, the author read many documents by international NGOs and agencies that claim to be discussing education for all, quality education, etc. Yet many fail to mention disabled learners or even the broader group of ‘learners with special educational needs’. Such agencies could exert positive influence over national education policies, by demonstrating the inclusion of disability issues throughout their work. They are frequently missing these opportunities, however.

Over the years, strong arguments have developed around the inappropriateness of ‘Northern’ education approaches being used unchanged in ‘Southern’ contexts, and the extent to which national policies and plans in Southern countries are being negatively affected by international influences. Authors such as Joseph Kisanji have written for many years about the need to build on inclusive practices and attitudes already present within local cultures. In relation to Tanzania, Kisanji and Saanane note that the “majority of technocrats and policy makers...today are seldom informed by this cultural base. They are greatly influenced by global frameworks and perspectives”.<sup>3</sup> This is an observation that applies to many African countries.

The Ethiopia and Rwanda education policies and plans have been analysed to see how they are using or have been influenced by international commitments, and whether or to what extent they are also building on the inputs of indigenous culture and stakeholder perspectives.

### **1.2.5. Data collection**

Education data collection and analysis is improving in many countries, with the development of processes such as education management information systems (EMIS). We are now able to find out figures for enrolment, retention, repetition, drop-out, exam passes, etc. The challenge comes when we want to know the representation of certain groups of learners within these statistics. Increasingly data is being disaggregated by gender, but information on other marginalised groups remains limited.

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<sup>3</sup> Kisanji and Saanane, 2009, p24



Some authors<sup>4</sup> encourage caution when gathering and citing statistics relating to the education of disabled learners. Variations in data collection methods, the culturally specific definitions of disability and special educational needs, and the fact that disabled children and children with special educational needs are not homogenous groups, all increase the unreliability of statistics and statistical comparisons. Saunders and Miles<sup>5</sup> also argued that a fixation with statistics can waste resources and delay action, when often there is enough information available to start a programme and then use that programme as the basis for more reliable data collection.

Useful information for policy development and monitoring does not come only in the form of statistics. Information about what is actually happening in schools and communities is vital. Yet often insufficient efforts are made to record positive practices in relation to the education of disabled and other marginalised learners. In particular, documenting (and therefore building on) positive practices within local stakeholder initiatives is relatively rare. Such accounts – which include ‘insider knowledge’ and the opinions of disabled people – are a vital but often neglected part of the process of learning more about education for disabled learners.

Statistics for Ethiopia and Rwanda are presented in this paper, but should be treated with extreme caution. Other information has been sought, particularly to illustrate stakeholder perspectives on the situation of disabled learners. In the limited scope of this paper, however, it has not been possible to do this comprehensively. There is a need for significant new inputs into this aspect of data collection, so that access to such information can be improved.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Stubbs, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Saunders and Miles, 1990.

## 2. Summary of statistics

### 2.1. Availability of statistics

Both Ethiopia and Rwanda lack statistics relating to disability in general and to the education of disabled learners specifically. This chapter highlights the statistics that are available. However, many of the numbers are just estimates. Documents cite figures with apparent confidence, when in reality the numbers may be no more accurate than if they were randomly chosen.

Both countries' special needs education policy documents explain the situation regarding statistics:

“There are no reliable data available on the inclusion or exclusion of disadvantaged groups in education.” (Ethiopia)<sup>6</sup>

“Figures concerning the numbers of children who are educationally disadvantaged are not currently available, since no reliable data has been collected, but this is planned for the near future.” (Rwanda)<sup>7</sup>

Not surprisingly, therefore, even key government documents have relied on estimates of the numbers of children from marginalised groups who are in or not in education.

Even where statistics on disability are available, they are not necessarily used effectively to assist education developments. For instance, Rwanda's 2002 census summary document<sup>8</sup> indicates that its data on disability will be used in planning medical and rehabilitation projects, but does not suggest using it for developing better education for disabled people – presumably because the data is not disaggregated by age (see below).

### 2.2. Numbers of disabled children and adults

The 1994 genocide resulted in an increase in disability in Rwanda – not only as a direct result of the violence, but also because of the breakdown of health, vaccination and rehabilitation services. It also resulted in an increased interest in and information about disability issues – at least in relation to disabled genocide survivors. This has not necessarily translated into an increase in reliable statistics on disability.

The 2002 census<sup>9</sup> in Rwanda showed that 4.7 per cent of the population was disabled (i.e. 382,042 out of the total population of 8,128,553). Thomas<sup>10</sup> warns, however, that the stigma surrounding disability is likely to have led to

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p5

<sup>7</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a, pp7-8

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003a

<sup>9</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003a, p27

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, 2005

the under-reporting of disability by households. Unfortunately, the census does not disaggregate the statistics on disabled people by age. The following table shows crudely estimated numbers.

Table 1: Estimated numbers of disabled children in Rwanda

Age	Total number of children <sup>11</sup>	Estimated number of disabled children if 4.7% is applied
0-19 years	4,635,334	217,861
5-14 years	2,236,264	105,104

Ethiopia's 1994 Population and Housing Census indicated a total population of 53,477,265 of whom 991,916 were disabled (1.85 per cent of the population).<sup>12</sup> However, as the various sources that cite this statistic highlight, this is well below the ten per cent estimate that is so often used.<sup>13</sup> As with Rwanda, potential under-reporting of disability during the Ethiopia census is likely, due to stigma and people's different interpretations of the census question.<sup>14</sup> Tirussew<sup>15</sup> cites figures from a 1995 national baseline survey indicating that 2.95 per cent of the population had sensory, motor and cognitive disabilities. This meant 691,765 disabled school-age children. Since various sources cite different figures for Ethiopia's disabled population even within similar time frames,<sup>16</sup> it is unlikely that any statistics can be treated with certainty.

### 2.3. Types of impairment

Rwanda's 2002 census and Ethiopia's 1994 census showed some impairment-specific statistics available for the general population (and other sources provide statistics for different impairments among genocide survivors in Rwanda),<sup>17</sup> but there appear to be no figures for specific impairments among disabled children and young people.

<sup>11</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003a, p13

<sup>12</sup> Sources: [www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disid2001h.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disid2001h.htm) and [http://ethiopia.disabilityafrica.org/documents.php?action=view\\_doc&doc\\_id=590&screen=1280](http://ethiopia.disabilityafrica.org/documents.php?action=view_doc&doc_id=590&screen=1280) [accessed March 2009]. The 2007 census (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2008) indicates the total population has risen to 73,918,505, but this initial summary document does not yet contain information on disability.

<sup>13</sup> The figure of 10 per cent seems to be the default estimate for many governments, possibly based on a figure from the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, United Nations, 1983 (Stubbs, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> The census question was "Is there member of household who is physically or mentally disabled?" [www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%201994/survey0/index.html](http://www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%201994/survey0/index.html) [accessed March 2009]. Depending on how it is interpreted, this question could potentially lead households to omit anyone with a sensory impairment.

<sup>15</sup> Tirussew, 2006, p59

<sup>16</sup> In addition to those already given, World Vision (2007, p7) cite a study by the Japan Cooperation Agency in 2002 which suggested 7.6 per cent of the population (approximately 5 million) were disabled. Fidida's website indicates "there are about 7 million disabled persons in Ethiopia" though no source is given to indicate which year this figure relates to. [www.fidida.fi/kuvagalleria/etiopia2/index.htm](http://www.fidida.fi/kuvagalleria/etiopia2/index.htm) [accessed February 2009].

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2.

## 2.4. Numbers of disabled people in education

Neither country can provide accurate nationwide statistics for disabled children (or children with special educational needs) who are already in school. Sources primarily offer estimates of the numbers of learners who may have special educational needs, but it is not always clear if these children are already in the education system, or are simply potential learners.

### ***Numbers of disabled learners across the education system***

The Rwandan Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2006–2010<sup>18</sup> states that “some 10% of all students suffer from some form of disability”. This is a significantly higher figure than the 4.7 per cent of the general population who are disabled, as suggested by the 2002 census. The figure of ten per cent appears, again, to be an estimate (see footnote 13) and is not broken down by educational levels. The ESSP also notes that there is a larger proportion of children with special educational needs (disabled children, orphans, street children and child heads of family) than would normally be expected, due to the war and genocide. Exact numbers are not given, however.

Rwanda’s Special Needs Education (SNE) Policy reiterates this ten per cent figure and suggests this means around 175,205 learners could “have some degree of disability”.<sup>19</sup> Yet it also states that only 1,713 disabled pupils are “known to be cared for in schools or rehabilitation centres”.<sup>20</sup> The policy does not indicate what level of education or type of school these pupils are in. None of these sources give statistics on disabled learners according to impairment.

Education documents from or about Ethiopia similarly favour the figure that 10–20 per cent of children have special educational needs. The country’s third Education Sector Development Program (ESDP III) highlights that this is based on estimates: “Although EMIS currently does not have data on special needs education, simply taking the international situation into account, Ethiopia will have an estimated number of 1.7 to 3.4 million school-age children with special needs education”.<sup>21</sup> The SNE Program Strategy estimates that 1.5–3 million learners will need special attention due to disabilities, learning difficulties, or being gifted or talented. It also says that an “insignificant” number of students with special educational needs are in vocational, secondary or higher education.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, p18.

<sup>19</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, pp7-8. It is not clear if these are learners already in the education system, or potential learners.

<sup>20</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, pp7-8

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2005, p26. The SNE Program Strategy, however, states that the numbers of children considered to have special educational needs is to be included in enrolment, drop-out and repetition rates, as collected through EMIS (Ministry of Education (Ethiopia) 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006

### ***Numbers of disabled learners in segregated education***

Haile and Bogale<sup>23</sup> cited 1997 EMIS figures in Ethiopia that 2,300 disabled children were being educated in seven special boarding schools, eight special day schools and 42 special classes. Ethiopia's ESDPIII – written almost ten years later – indicated that there were still 15 special schools but 285 special classes attached to regular government schools. However, an increase in the number of special classes would still come nowhere near educating all of the country's disabled children (especially considering the estimate of 691,765 disabled children cited by Tirussew above).

Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy presents a table which shows the numbers of special classes/units/schools for children with particular impairments (see Section 5.3). It does not indicate how many children are enrolled in these facilities, however.

Low numbers of disabled children are also being catered for in segregated education in Rwanda. Karangwa, for instance, suggested in 2006<sup>24</sup> that just 800 disabled children were being educated in the country's special schools and centres. Increases in the number of special schools/centres in the last few years (to around 34)<sup>25</sup> may have raised this enrolment figure (exact data was not available to the current author). But the segregated provision will still be far from reaching all disabled children in Rwanda.

### ***Numbers of deaf children in schools/centres***

A report by Karangwa and Kobusingye provides a small snapshot of education for deaf children in Rwanda. At the time of their study (2007), nine deaf children were in (a private) secondary school; and from an estimated 10,000 deaf children in the country, just 300 (three per cent) were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, and two attended university.<sup>26</sup> For Ethiopia, a similar figure is available – just two per cent of Ethiopia's 190,000 deaf children currently access school (primarily segregated).<sup>27</sup>

### ***Numbers of disabled children in mainstream schools***

These figures are much harder to find in research documents, and indeed are much more difficult for governments or NGOs to gather, than statistics on the numbers of learners in segregated education.

Karangwa<sup>28</sup> cites the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) 1999 study which indicated that in Rwanda "...Inclusion of learners with S.E.N. [special educational needs] has been going on unofficially" and in one commune

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<sup>23</sup> Haile and Bogale, 1999. Yet various sources mention that "there is no information in the EMIS publications on the disabled in school as well as of out-of-school" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the National Technical Committee on Educational Statistics Capacity Building, 2004). It is possible that the 1997 EMIS counted the number of pupils in special schools, without looking at disability issues/special educational needs in the general school/out-of-school population.

<sup>24</sup> Karangwa, 2006, p.32

<sup>25</sup> Karangwa, personal communication, April 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>27</sup> See: Finnish International Lutheran Mission's website [www.mission.fi/in\\_english/--print?x126=730154](http://www.mission.fi/in_english/--print?x126=730154). Page dated December 2007. [accessed March 2009].

<sup>28</sup> Karangwa 2006, p.47

alone, at least 85 disabled learners were in regular primary schools. Ten years after that report, comprehensive national figures of disabled children in mainstream schools are still not available. However, figures for 19 primary schools that Handicap International works with across six districts are available (see Appendix 3 for full details).<sup>29</sup>

Table 2: Disabled children enrolled in 19 mainstream primary schools, 6 districts, Rwanda, 2009 academic year

	Number of girls enrolled	Number of boys enrolled	Total
Visually impaired students	38	53	91
Hearing impaired students	24	27	51
Physically impaired students	74	87	161
Intellectually impaired students	57	57	114
Students with epilepsy	18	18	36
Albino students	3	2	5
Students affected by trauma	3	7	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>468</b>

Source: Handicap International records, April 2009

UNICEF indicate that 7,500 disabled children are being educated within mainstream schools involved in Rwanda's child-friendly schools programme (see Section 5.5 for details). The programme currently covers only a proportion of the country's primary schools, however, so this figure is not nationally representative.

Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy shows that there were five primary schools 'integrating disabled students' (one enrolling blind students, and two each enrolling deaf and intellectually impaired students); and two secondary schools (one each enrolling blind and deaf students). However, these figures are likely to be misleading and should be treated with extreme caution. There has not been a comprehensive survey of disabled children in mainstream schools in Ethiopia, so the fact that only seven schools supposedly 'integrate' disabled learners is almost certainly an underestimate. The figure is perhaps based on those schools that are officially recorded as part of government/NGO projects for special needs or inclusive education. As indicated for Rwanda (above) enrolment of disabled learners in mainstream schools in Ethiopia is likely to be happening 'unofficially' and unrecorded in many other schools.

### ***Numbers of disabled people in higher education***

In Rwanda, 2008 was the first year for the government's programme to facilitate disabled students' enrolment in higher education. In that academic year, 15 blind students, six deaf students and one physically impaired student were enrolled in universities.<sup>30</sup> World Vision indicate that there are around 250 blind students in higher education institutions in Ethiopia, and that Addis Ababa University has 183 blind undergraduates and postgraduates.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> These figures do not represent all of the schools with which Handicap International is working in Rwanda.

<sup>30</sup> Karangwa, 2008

<sup>31</sup> World Vision, 2007

## 2.5. Numbers of disabled people out of school

Various sources provide statistics on: out-of-school children; adults who have never attended school or did not complete their education; transition rates between primary and secondary education; and repetition and drop-out rates. None relate specifically to disabled learners.

The SNE Policy in Rwanda<sup>32</sup> highlights a link between the lack of support for children with special educational needs and drop-out rates, but does not offer specific evidence. Thomas<sup>33</sup> cites an estimate from the Special Needs Department in the Ministry of Education that special schools have the capacity to educate only 0.5 per cent of Rwanda's disabled children. However, no reliable data is available on the numbers of disabled children being educated beyond the special school system, or not being educated at all.

A report by UNESCO/IICBA<sup>34</sup> states a similar figure for Ethiopia: "less than 1% of children with special needs have access to education". Tirussew notes that although children with disabilities and learning difficulties have been attending mainstream schools, their problems and needs are often not recognised or supported, which "has contributed to the alarming early school drop-out rate in the country".<sup>35</sup> Again no specific figures are given.

Ethiopia also faces a situation with very few early childhood development programmes. Those that do exist are primarily urban based. This means that many children are not receiving the early support they need. In particular, disabled children's needs are not being identified before they start school, which means many disabled children subsequently drop out in the first grade, when they find that their school cannot offer quality education that responds to their needs.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.6. The limitations of statistics

It is vital to remember that statistics can be very misleading. In either country, a number of schools may be enrolling disabled learners without being part of a project or programme that records or counts these students. Also, many disabled children may be in mainstream schools but not actively participating or achieving, unless their schools are making conscious efforts to develop inclusive practices. It is therefore not sufficient (indeed it can be dangerous) to look only at statistics when discussing the education of disabled people. The figures might show us (incomplete) pictures of *what* is happening, but they cannot tell us *why* this is happening or *how* these situations arose. Without a

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<sup>32</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a

<sup>33</sup> Thomas, 2005, p40

<sup>34</sup> UNESCO IICBA, 2005, p7

<sup>35</sup> Tirussew, 2006, p60

<sup>36</sup> Elina Lehtomäki (2006) 'Support to education in Ethiopia'. Interview at a workshop of The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion Flagship in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6-8 December, 2006. See: [www.inclusionflagship.net/interview3\\_low.wmv](http://www.inclusionflagship.net/interview3_low.wmv)

picture of the why and how, effective strategies for the education of disabled people cannot be found.



### 3. Reasons for the marginalisation of disabled people from and within education

This section will look briefly at discrimination against disabled people in society, reasons why disabled people are *excluded from* education, and reasons why disabled people are *marginalised within* the education system. However, it is important to stress that we should not rely on these sorts of generalisations across a country. Every community and school has its own unique set of challenges in relation to disability, education and inclusion. Successful solutions can only be found if the local context is thoroughly investigated and taken into account during planning processes – by ‘experts’ and by local stakeholders. The following information, therefore, does not provide a definitive description of the causes of exclusion for disabled learners in Ethiopia and Rwanda.

#### 3.1. Discrimination in society

The literature highlights some conflicting views regarding the impact of Rwanda’s genocide on society’s attitudes towards disabled people. Various authors highlight changes in attitudes since 1994. Disabled people seem more visible and government support to genocide survivors has raised the profile of disability within policy and legislation – although financial commitment and clarity within policy are still elusive. As with other conflict-affected countries – such as Mozambique and Palestine – physical impairments, especially among amputees, seem to be viewed less negatively now in Rwanda. However, those who acquired their impairment during the genocide seem prioritised over other disabled people.<sup>37</sup> Many disabled people – especially those who are blind, deaf, or intellectually impaired – still face routine discrimination. There is concern that deaf people’s rights and entitlements in particular are not being upheld.<sup>38</sup>

Post-genocide efforts in Rwanda to remove the use of negative ethnic labels have not been extended to the use of negative words associated with disability (e.g. words for disabled people still have prefixes that denote objects not people).<sup>39</sup> Attitudes towards disability in Ethiopia are also still characterised by stereotypes and prejudice, based on traditionally held views that link disability with immorality, punishment and curses.<sup>40</sup> Labelling people according to their disability is still common, and disabled children and their parents are stigmatised.<sup>41</sup> World Vision highlight some positive attitude shifts in Ethiopia, with buildings, transport and media becoming gradually more accessible.<sup>42</sup> However they also note that “there is no rule in the country to

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas, 2005

<sup>38</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>39</sup> Karangwa (2006)

<sup>40</sup> Tirussew, 2006

<sup>41</sup> Weldeab and Opdal, 2007

<sup>42</sup> For example, there has been a weekly sign language television programme for more than ten years. World Vision, 2007

ensure accessibility of the school environment and no responsible body in the education sector to ensure accessibility of the classrooms, school facilities and the school compound at large...there is no special transport arrangement for students with disabilities".<sup>43</sup>

Thomas's study<sup>44</sup> found that disabled people in Rwanda were often excluded from development initiatives, such as micro-credit schemes. This is echoed in Ethiopia, where "Disabled persons are thought as economically dependent and treated as irrelevant to development" and are denied employment opportunities, and where awareness raising on disability issues has so far not been extensive enough.<sup>45</sup>

In Rwanda, an ethnographic study by Karangwa<sup>46</sup> found that disabled children's position within their families influenced their community interactions and schooling. Wealthier, urban households in the study sample were more likely to hide or mistreat their disabled children than poorer households. In the former, disabled children did not seem to have a place in the family, whereas in poorer households they were more active and visible members of the family. This is perhaps because poorer families had no extra rooms in which to place disabled children and could not pay for outsiders to care for them.

### **3.2. Exclusion from education**

"Most disabled people lack access to education, and illiteracy among disabled Rwandans is higher than in the general population."<sup>47</sup>

"The majority [of deaf children] are known to remain in their homes while their siblings go to the neighborhood schools because the Rwandan education system remains inflexibly traditional and does not recognize the inclusion of the deaf".<sup>48</sup>

When the Rwandan ESSP 2006–2010 was compiled, there were just five special educational centres for children with hearing, visual, physical and intellectual impairments, and only one at secondary level.<sup>49</sup> Although there are more special centres and schools now, (around 34), they still cannot educate all of Rwanda's disabled children. Some disabled children are being educated in their local mainstream schools, because parents have no alternative and teachers feel a moral obligation to accept them.<sup>50</sup> However, this covers a very small percentage of disabled children,<sup>51</sup> few planned

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<sup>43</sup> World Vision, 2007, p27

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, 2005

<sup>45</sup> Country Paper: Ethiopia, United Nations expert group meeting on disability-sensitive policy and programme monitoring and evaluation UNHQ, New York, 3-5 December 2001. See: [www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disid2001h.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disid2001h.htm)

<sup>46</sup> Karangwa (2006)

<sup>47</sup> Thomas, 2005, p25

<sup>48</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007, p2

<sup>49</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006a

<sup>50</sup> Karangwa, 2006

<sup>51</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a

activities support their education in mainstream schools, and teachers often will not accept children with intellectual or severe impairments.

According to Rwanda's SNE Policy,<sup>52</sup> disabled children are excluded from their local schools due to long travel distances, discriminatory attitudes among students and staff, communication barriers for those who are deaf and blind, lack of support for teachers, and inaccessible school infrastructure. A lack of assessment and early intervention provision may also be a key reason why deaf children do not go to school.<sup>53</sup> The poor state of school toilets – a common factor in the exclusion of disabled learners – is mentioned in Rwanda's EFA Plan of Action,<sup>54</sup> yet only in relation to the impact on girls' inclusion, not disabled learners.

In Ethiopia, parents consulted for World Vision's study<sup>55</sup> highlighted that disabled children do not go to school because teachers are not patient with them in the mainstream schools and fellow students do not understand their difficulties; while in the special school system there are too few schools, which are too far from home and too expensive. The country's SNE Program Strategy indicates that teachers' lack of awareness of all children's rights to education is a key reason for disabled children being turned away from mainstream schools. It also highlights that special units and schools are mostly confined to urban areas and have long waiting lists, and that "TVET [technical and vocational education and training] programs have predetermined rules imposing restrictions on candidates with special educational needs".

Further, the Strategy notes that the ESDP II allocated a recurrent budget of 1,993,300 Birr to special needs education, yet regions did not report on any activities or expenditure under this budget component. Special schools and units apparently had their budget requests denied, which the Strategy attributes to the lack of awareness and knowledge about special needs education among *woreda* (district) officials.<sup>56</sup>

Haile and Bogale<sup>57</sup> note that children with intellectual impairments in Ethiopia were least likely to be supported to get an education. They also mention another key problem that is not unique to Ethiopia. Much of the work that is being done to develop education for disabled learners is in the form of NGO-funded or pilot programmes which do not necessarily continue after the initial support period, and which are often not scaled up. These initiatives, therefore, are not helping to tackle the full scale of the educational exclusion faced by disabled learners.

Despite the lack of concrete data from either country, disabled learners are assumed to feature prominently among those who repeat or drop out of

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<sup>52</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a

<sup>53</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>54</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003c

<sup>55</sup> World Vision, 2007

<sup>56</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006

<sup>57</sup> Haile and Bogale, 1999

school. This is born out for Rwanda when Thomas<sup>58</sup> reports cases of disabled children forced to leave school because they have repeated grades too often.

### 3.3. Marginalisation *within* education

“[in Ethiopia]...teachers find it difficult to accommodate students with special educational needs, and compel them to adapt to the school, instead of adapting to the needs of the students.”<sup>59</sup>

Those disabled learners who are enrolled in a mainstream school may still be marginalised – not participating or achieving. Both countries experience similar reasons for this, including:

- lack of sign language skills among teachers<sup>60</sup>
- resource and infrastructure constraints
- inflexibility – schools not adjusting to meet learners’ needs
- teachers’ lack of information and training on how to adapt teaching methods for a more diverse range of learners. Teacher education institutions have few staff with suitable experience, and training materials are outdated or not relevant to the country context<sup>61</sup>
- lack of early identification of learning needs, and limited or inappropriate assessment processes
- limited attempts by special schools to move some children into mainstream schools have involved little preparation of mainstream teachers and little follow-up.<sup>62</sup>

The situation regarding special schools is also similar between the countries. In Ethiopia, Tirussew<sup>63</sup> states that special schools are “generally overcrowded, urban based and ill equipped with insufficient human and material resources”. Special schools in Rwanda face the same problems. The quality of education for those enrolled in special schools and centres in Rwanda is also affected by: abuse and sexual abuse in these institutions;<sup>64</sup> poor management of special schools and centres by the government; and confusion within the special schools/centres regarding which ministry they fall under – Ministry of Social Affairs and Local Government (MINALOC), MINEDUC or Ministry of Health.<sup>65</sup> The latter is a problem common to many countries.

Rwanda’s SNE Policy<sup>66</sup> highlights that the National Curriculum, the National Examination Council and the General Inspectorate do not yet have provisions

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas, 2005

<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, preface

<sup>60</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, 2005

<sup>63</sup> Tirussew, 2006, p59

<sup>64</sup> Thomas’s 2005 study found evidence of both

<sup>65</sup> Thomas, 2005. In Rwanda, MINALOC is the main ministry responsible for disability issues and developed a National Policy for the Protection of the Handicapped.

<sup>66</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a

for learners with special educational needs (disabled learners are not specifically mentioned) – whether in special or mainstream schools. If the curricula and examinations are not being flexibly created with all learners' needs in mind, this is likely to be another cause of marginalisation of disabled learners within education. The Policy also notes a lack of personnel at ministerial and local level who have remit for or experience with education for disabled learners. However, there are staff in MINEDUC and in the Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) who have qualifications in special needs education, and who are committed to promoting inclusive education principles, providing a positive basis for the future.

## 4. Review of policy

A range of education and other national policy and planning documents from Ethiopia and Rwanda have been reviewed for this paper.<sup>67</sup> Inevitably, given the limited scope of this paper, some have been omitted. The documents were assessed according to the key issues defined in the Section 1.2: definitions of concepts; visibility of disabled people; guidance for implementers; and international versus local influences.

### 4.1. Wider policy context

In both countries, disability issues are gradually becoming more prominent within national policies and legislation. Ethiopia's constitution states that all international agreements (including the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 1993, and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994), "are an integral part of the law of the land". It upholds "those rights of citizens to equal access to publicly funded services and the support that shall be given to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities".<sup>68</sup> The country has a National Plan of Action for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, but it is not yet effectively implemented.<sup>69</sup>

Disabled people's rights are also mentioned in the Rwandan constitution, and discrimination against disabled people is prohibited in the 2001 Law Instituting Punishment for Offences of Discrimination and Sectarianism. The Ten Year National Development plan has a paragraph on disability and a National Policy for the Protection of the Handicapped has been developed by MINALOC.<sup>70</sup>

In 2002, Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper made no significant mention of disability, noting only that 'handicapped' people are likely to be among the poorest.<sup>71</sup> Encouragingly, the new Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy<sup>72</sup> does mention "physically and mentally handicapped" people in relation to supporting education for vulnerable children, and revising the curriculum so that it meets disabled learners' needs.

Ethiopia's 2002 Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program did not *specifically* discuss disability issues, but it did mention special needs education in a way that indicates a primary focus on disabled learners.<sup>73</sup> It

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<sup>67</sup> See reference list for details.

<sup>68</sup> World Vision, 2007, p16

<sup>69</sup> 'Supplementary Report of NGOs on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Ethiopia. A Supplement to the Third Five-Year Country Report of Ethiopia.' Compiled by The Children and Youth Forum of the Christian Relief and Development Association (no date).

<sup>70</sup> Thomas 2005

<sup>71</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2002

<sup>72</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007b, p57

<sup>73</sup> For example, "Offer short-term training programs in Braille, sign language, mobility, orientation, etc., to teachers and professionals..." (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2002, pp95-6).

also somewhat ambiguously stated that “to expand the special needs education programs, integrated approaches will be designed for students with special needs”; but then discussed actions that focus on segregation (constructing new schools and classes for children with special needs) rather than on integration or inclusion. The subsequent 2006 Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty seems to mention education for disabled learners or learners with special educational needs less than the 2002 document – primarily just reiterating details from ESDP III.

## 4.2. Definitions of key concepts

While both Rwanda’s and Ethiopia’s key education documents mention education approaches for marginalised groups, they do not consistently explain the key concepts they are using. The overall education sector plans (ESSP in Rwanda and ESDP III in Ethiopia) mention special educational needs, but do not offer any definitions of the concept or explain which learners are considered to have special educational needs. In Ethiopia, the overarching 1994 Education and Training Policy “lacks clarity in terms of special needs education and, therefore, special needs education has not been included in education sector development programs”.<sup>74</sup>

The SNE Policy in Rwanda and the SNE Program Strategy in Ethiopia do subsequently provide more clarity. In Rwanda the document specifies that ‘children with disabilities’ are those with physical, hearing, visual and intellectual impairments. It considers disabled learners to be part of the group of learners with special educational needs, along with: children with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses; those traumatised by the genocide, abuse or family conflict; those with social and emotional problems or speech/communication difficulties; ‘slow learners’ and ‘underachievers’; and children who are gifted or talented.<sup>75</sup> The Policy anticipates further groups will be added in future. It does not, however, clearly explain what it means by ‘inclusive schools’ or ‘inclusive education’.

In slight contrast to the Rwandan document, the Ethiopia SNE Program Strategy does offer detailed definitions of the key concepts, for instance, drawing on UNESCO definitions of inclusive education. It says that special needs education “focuses on children and students who are at risk of repetition and dropout due to learning difficulties, disabilities, socio-emotional problems, or are excluded from education”.<sup>76</sup>

Rwanda’s Strategic Plan for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2007-2011<sup>77</sup> aims to “Revise and adapt education curricula to ensure include [sic]: ... inclusive education for children with special needs [among others]”. However, it does not define what it means by inclusive education or explain who children with special need are.

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<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p5

<sup>75</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a, p6

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p3

<sup>77</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006b, p33

Language issues may play a significant role in the writing and interpretation of policies and plans relating to education for disabled people. Ethiopian languages, for instance, do not have terms that fit neatly with the concept of 'disability' (in English), so even if policies define disability, there is no guarantee that readers will interpret the concept in the same way.<sup>78</sup> The lack of clear definitions in Rwanda's documents is also possibly due to language challenges. For instance, 'inclusive education' does not translate directly into Kinyarwanda,<sup>79</sup> nor is it an indigenous term in French.

### **4.3. International versus local influences on education policies and plans**

#### ***EFA and MDGs***

As highlighted in the introduction, the EFA goals exert influence over national education policies and plans, which is why the EFA movement's limited focus on disability is seen by many as worrying. Rwanda's EFA Plan of Action aims for "no disparity in education, by sex, region or other group". Disability is not specifically listed. The strategy that accompanies this aim<sup>80</sup> is also vague, when compared to the details provided in the gender-focused strategies. The Plan mentions disability only while quoting an Education Sector Policy objective: "To eliminate all the causes and obstacles which can lead to disparity in education, whether by gender, disability, geographical or social group". While Rwanda's MINEDUC website states that special needs education has been made a priority in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals of education for all by 2015,<sup>81</sup> the EFA Plan of Action on its own is not a solid basis for ensuring education for all disabled children in Rwanda.

International commitments are also influencing education for disabled people in Ethiopia. Woldemichael (2008), Ethiopia's Minister of Education, notes that "We can not attain MDG ignoring the marginalized and those with learning difficulties and impairments".<sup>82</sup> The SNE Program Strategy further stresses that it has been developed to help "actualize Education for All"<sup>83</sup> and that "the connection between the goals of UPEC, EFA and the Millennium Development must be made clear".<sup>84</sup>

#### ***Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***

The key education policies and plans reviewed for this background paper were prepared before the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was finalised at the end of 2006. However, given that Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy and Rwanda's SNE Policy were both prepared at a

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<sup>78</sup> Weldeab and Opdal, 2007

<sup>79</sup> Karangwa (2006)

<sup>80</sup> "Support marginalised areas and vulnerable groups, such as orphans, children who head families, children with special needs", Republic of Rwanda, 2003c, p45

<sup>81</sup> See: [www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168](http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168) [accessed March 2009].

<sup>82</sup> Woldemichael, 2008

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, preface

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p31



time when the new Convention was being debated, it is perhaps remiss that neither mentions the Convention, even as a forthcoming document. As the Convention firmly promotes inclusive education for disabled learners, both countries may need to consider to what extent this has implications for their own direction of work, given that they both have significant elements of segregated education within their policies/plans.

### ***Risk of dependency***

Karangwa's work consistently highlights the inclusive potential within Rwandan and African society:

“African people have a well entrenched and admirable culture of extensive and family bonds, community solidarity and a spirit of mutual support – all of which should be exploited for the benefits of inclusion for people with disabilities”.<sup>85</sup>

This was born out in Rwanda by the high level of community support offered when the first blind students were included in mainstream secondary school, compared to the minimal financial and technical inputs from the government or NGOs.<sup>86</sup> Yet Karangwa also found that the five special schools/centres involved in his study<sup>87</sup> were very dependent on foreign expertise and funding, and community members had come to expect that services for disabled people would be supported in this way, rather than through community or government initiatives.

Ethiopia's ESDPIII also reports on the key role being played by communities in planning and raising resources for schools, and raising awareness of the benefits of education (though not necessarily in relation to education for disabled learners). However, “PTAs [parent teacher associations] do not appear to be contributing much to the education of children with disabilities at large”.<sup>88</sup>

In both countries, government policy and planning documents highlight the need for partnerships between government, parents, communities, schools, NGOs, the private sector, etc. They explain the importance of regular and participatory consultations, outline stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in education, and stress that the documents were written in consultation with stakeholders. However, what is missing from the documents in both countries is reference to a process of developing policies based on the positive, inclusive elements of their own country's culture. As a result, the documents risk presenting the idea that education for disabled learners, and inclusion generally, is almost entirely a non-indigenous concept. This negates the positive practices that are almost certainly happening in many schools and communities across Ethiopia and Rwanda, if only ways were found to document and share these experiences.

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<sup>85</sup> Karangwa, 2003, p4

<sup>86</sup> See below for case story.

<sup>87</sup> Karangwa, 2006

<sup>88</sup> World Vision, p30

#### 4.4. Visibility of disabled learners within national education policies and plans

Most of Rwanda's and Ethiopia's education policy and planning documents contain more inferred than direct references to disability, by discussing special needs education, or less frequently inclusive education. In the Rwanda policy case, it might be assumed that policy-makers have disabled people clearly in mind. For example, the documents often seem to use 'special educational needs' when the content is referring just to disabled learners.<sup>89</sup> The same may be true with Ethiopia. For instance, the Ministry of Education has established a committee "to follow up implementation of special needs education services and to coordinate cooperation".<sup>90</sup> The SNE Program Strategy notes that this committee has representatives from disabled people's associations but does not mention representatives from other marginalised groups.

The SNE Policy in Rwanda has several instances where disabled learners are clearly mentioned on their own, not as part of the special needs group. For instance "experts specializing in particular disabilities will be added to the Special Education Department" to support those working on adapting curriculum and examination methods and to liaise with other ministries such as the Ministry of Health regarding the provision of mobility aids.<sup>91</sup>

Rwanda's Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Development Policy<sup>92</sup> also specifically mentioned promoting respect for learners who are "mentally and physically disabled and those suffering from emotional distress" and developing curricula that cater to all levels of ability. However, the National Curriculum Development Centre 6 Year Plan: 2003 to 2008<sup>93</sup> – which looked at how the policy would be implemented – subsequently made no mention of disability.

The Rwandan ESSP places special needs education as a key priority for primary education.<sup>94</sup> Special needs education is not, however, in the priority list for secondary or higher education, although higher education does aim to "accommodate a more diverse population including equal opportunities for the disadvantaged (particularly females)".<sup>95</sup> The ESSP finance chapter mentions no specific details of funding special needs education activities at any level. This is despite the fact that the Strategic Plan for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2007–2011 says that plans for an "inclusive education

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<sup>89</sup> For instance, the ESSP (Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, p18) sets a target of having "SEN teachers for various disabilities" (rather than SEN teachers for learners with a variety of special educational needs).

<sup>90</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p22-3

<sup>91</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2007a, p16

<sup>92</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003d, pp3-4

<sup>93</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2003e

<sup>94</sup> There is a focus on: raising awareness; adapting the physical environment; creating flexible curricula, learning environments and monitoring and evaluation strategies; developing/training human resources; promoting community-based support for disabled and other 'challenged' people, and using EMIS to identify the numbers of children 'needing assistance' (Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, p18).

<sup>95</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006a, p51

package” are budgeted for as “part of MINEDUC plans”.<sup>96</sup> Ideally, of course, special needs or inclusive education funding would be fully integrated within all the other budget lines, but the ESSP finance section does not offer reassurances on this.

Various opportunities to mainstream disability issues in Rwanda’s ESSP were missed. For instance the plan mentions building more schools and increasing teaching materials, but does not discuss ensuring their accessibility. However, in 2008 MINEDUC drafted ‘Child Friendly Schools Infrastructure Standards and Guidelines. Primary and Tronc Commun Schools’. This document states clearly that “A school must have a child-friendly, barrier free environment which promotes inclusive access and equal rights of every child”.<sup>97</sup> This detailed document (currently still in draft form) outlines a range of essential and desirable standards for the accessibility of classrooms, toilets, play areas, etc, for disabled children and other children who may experience marginalisation in education.

Ethiopia’s ESDPIII does not make any specific mention of disabled learners, nor does special needs education feature in the explanation of the overall strategy (although gender features, as do those affected by food insecurity, and illiterate adults). The document has a focus on equity, but presents this primarily in terms of gender equity. The document’s education situation analysis also does not mention disability. ESDP III does, however, state that “The Government attaches greater importance to the expansion of educational opportunities to children with special needs”.<sup>98</sup>

The 1994 Education and Training Policy in Ethiopia aims to “enable both the handicapped and the gifted [to] learn in accordance with their potential and needs”,<sup>99</sup> but then fails to provide details on how this will be achieved. Ethiopia’s SNE Program Strategy does not mention disabled learners specifically in the strategic aims, but in the strategic priorities section talks almost exclusively about disabled learners. In addition, the country’s Higher Education Proclamation (No.351/2003) states that higher education institutes should accept disabled students and provide material and professional support to meet their special educational needs.<sup>100</sup>

It is commendable that specific policies on special needs education and/or disabled learners have been created in both countries. However, if core education policies and plans (ESSP in Rwanda, ESDPIII in Ethiopia, EFA Plans, etc) do not also send out strong, clear messages about disabled learners, or responding to diversity generally in the education system, then there is a risk that the disability/special needs-specific policies will be

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<sup>96</sup> Republic of Rwanda, 2006b, p34

<sup>97</sup> Ministry of Education (draft for comment, 12/10/2008) ‘Child Friendly Schools Infrastructure Standards and Guidelines. Primary and Tronc Commun Schools’, MINEDUC: Kigali, p.4. See: [www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Rwanda\\_Schools\\_infrastructure\\_standards.pdf](http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Rwanda_Schools_infrastructure_standards.pdf) [accessed April 2009].

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2005, pp63-4

<sup>99</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994, p9

<sup>100</sup> World Vision, 2007

sidelined. There is also the challenge of how policy implementers ensure that they do not sideline disabled learners *within* the ‘special educational needs’ group, given that this group may contain a large number of learners from a wide range of marginalised groups in society.

#### 4.5. Guidance for implementers

Policy and planning documents can remain unused if they do not offer implementers a clear picture of the actions the government expects from them. In this respect, Ethiopia’s policies offer slightly more explicit guidance than Rwanda’s, in terms of the ‘model’ for special needs education in the country, and how the various education institutions fit into this ‘model’.

Official policies and plans in Rwanda at times lack clarity regarding the government’s vision for the education of disabled learners. The country’s ESSP and SNE Policy send out confusing messages on the extent to which special needs education is mainly a disability issue; and on whether or to what extent the government wants to end segregated education in special schools.<sup>101</sup>

The MINEDUC website,<sup>102</sup> rather than its policy documents, provides much-needed clarity, particularly regarding the issue of the balance between inclusive and special schools. The website explains that inclusive education is the “ideal educational model” and children with special educational needs “will be supported to attend their local school, where possible, rather than a ‘special school’ away from home”. Rwanda’s Minister of Education also stated in 2008<sup>103</sup> that “... the orientation of education in the post-genocide Rwanda will be strongly based on the ideology of inclusive education, valuing all children as equals, with equal access to education opportunities..”. However MINEDUC has indicated that it also believes that not all students’ needs can be met in an inclusive school (e.g. pupils with severe learning difficulties, and pupils who are deaf or blind),<sup>104</sup> so special centres will continue for them. The centres will become “centres of excellence”, and will support teacher training and pupil assessments.

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<sup>101</sup> For example, the SNE Policy (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a, p13) notes that few centres accommodate children with severe and profound learning difficulties, so to “reduce distances to school and ensure an accessible environment the number of schools will be increased and additional classrooms will be provided in existing schools. Both new and existing schools will be made accessible for children with physical disabilities and visual impairment”. The reader is left questioning whether these new schools will be special schools or mainstream schools; and why (if they are special schools) they will open their doors to physically and visually impaired children, when the Policy also implies that inclusive education should be the main thrust: “The education sector also strives for maximum inclusion for learners who have special educational needs in inclusive formal schools”.

<sup>102</sup> See: [www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168](http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168) [accessed March 2009].

<sup>103</sup> Presentation by Dr. Daphrosa Gahakwa, Rwandan Minister of Education, at International Conference on Education, 48th session, 25-28 November 2008 ‘Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future’. See:

[www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Dialogue/48th\\_ICE/Messages/rwanda\\_MIN08.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Dialogue/48th_ICE/Messages/rwanda_MIN08.pdf) [accessed April 2009].

<sup>104</sup> See case study below which illustrates inclusion of blind learners in regular schools in Rwanda.

The Rwandan SNE Policy does at least clearly outline various steps that it expects implementers to take regarding the education of learners considered to have special educational needs. Some of these steps focus specifically on disability issues, and include:

- district annual strategic plans, and periodic mapping, for learners with special educational needs
- national and district multi-sectoral advisory committees to advise and co-ordinate responses regarding mainstreaming disability and other vulnerable groups
- itinerant teachers supporting clusters of schools
- district level special needs education experts to support teachers, health and social workers, etc, and undertake assessment and placement work<sup>105</sup>
- a scheme for providing material support to help children with special educational needs<sup>106</sup>
- ‘orientation’ on education of learners with special educational needs for all educators and inspectors.

As with Rwanda, Ethiopia does not promote a vision that is purely inclusive education (in the sense of all learners’ – including disabled learners’ – needs being met within regular classes). The use of special schools and segregated units and classes in mainstream schools receives significant impetus through the Ethiopia SNE Program Strategy. For instance, it states that funds should be found or allocated to “strengthen the capacity of the existing special schools, units and classes [and] promote their expansion”.<sup>107</sup> However, it also calls for education officials and school management to be educated on “organizing inclusive schools to meet diverse needs in the mainstream classrooms”.<sup>108</sup> The Strategy further encourages the development of cluster schools and itinerant teachers to support staff working in both the regular classes and the special units/classes.

The document offers a diagram to illustrate how these three main elements – mainstream schools; cluster schools, itinerant teachers, special units/classes; and special schools – will interact with each other. Special schools will support cluster schools, which in turn will support mainstream schools. The diagram indicates that the “great majority” of learners with special educational needs will be educated within regular classes in mainstream schools.<sup>109</sup> The special units/classes will be mainly within the cluster schools.

While Rwanda’s ‘model’ has broadly similar elements – inclusive schools, special schools, and special centres – the policy makers in Rwanda appear

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<sup>105</sup> It is not explained whether this means choosing whether to place a child in a special or regular school.

<sup>106</sup> The policy says this is “for maximizing their inclusion in the education system in formal or alternative programs” (Republic of Rwanda, 2007a, p15) but this is not clear as to whether it mean in inclusive schools or whether it could be in special schools.

<sup>107</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p22

<sup>108</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p24

<sup>109</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p27

not to have explained the interrelationships between these elements quite as clearly as they have in Ethiopia.

Other steps outlined in Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy include:

- including special needs education within national and regional education sector planning and reporting systems at early childhood, primary, secondary, technical, vocational and higher education levels
- developing guidelines and providing technical assistance to regions
- introducing special needs education courses into all major pre/in-service teacher education programmes, with extra in-service training relating to disability for teachers in special schools/classes and for other support teachers
- co-operation with community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes
- resource centres for secondary and higher education institutions to help identify barriers to learning and support students and teachers (e.g. with Braille and ICT for blind student; sign language interpreters for deaf students, etc)
- ensuring that alternative basic education programmes include children with special educational needs.

Although Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy offers a clearer vision (than Rwanda's documents) for how the education system will be structured to deal with learners considered to have special educational needs, it does at times read as though it is advocating *to* the Ministry of Education, rather than being directly the words *of* the government. This raises slight concerns about the government's ownership of the strategy.<sup>110</sup>

It must be stressed that the above section outlines the respective governments' wishes or intentions with regards to implementation – it does not mean that these approaches and activities are actually happening.

## 4.6. Institutional responsibilities

Appendix 4 summarises the key responsibilities between ministries and stakeholders laid out in Ethiopia's and Rwanda's special needs education strategy/policy.

In Rwanda, the Special Needs Education department in MINEDUC is expected to plan and support education for vulnerable groups, but does not yet have its own well-developed activities, despite working closely with other organisations on child-friendly schools projects. MINALOC is expected to coordinate and monitor all organisations working with disabled people. This is a big responsibility, and is also likely to be one reason why disability issues have not yet been fully prioritised in MINEDUC. Despite the responsibilities for

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<sup>110</sup> For instance, it states, "In order to make the education system inclusive and to provide education for all, the MOE has to give priority to special needs education within the overall education sector development...". One might have expected it to state that the MOE already prioritises special needs education, hence this strategy (Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006, p21).

each ministry being laid out in the SNE Policy (see Appendix 4), in practice responsibility for disability issues is not being shared by all ministries.<sup>111</sup> In Ethiopia, some regions have begun drafting regional strategies and action plans for implementing the national SNE Program Strategy. A study by VSO<sup>112</sup> notes that the Tigray Regional Education Bureau has developed a five-year plan. However, the plan has no allocated budget, lacks clarity as to what 'inclusion' means ("no practical understanding of how [inclusion] is to be achieved, or what form it will take"), and focuses on 'awareness' without offering guidance as to what activities this means in practice. Co-operation on education between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Health in Ethiopia is reported to have begun but needs strengthening, as does the partnerships with other stakeholders and partners.<sup>113</sup>

Ethiopia has recently initiated the General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP), to address the fact that increased access/enrolment has not been matched with increased quality in education. Support to GEQIP from international partners (such as the Government of Finland and the World Bank) will focus on: the teacher development programme; curriculum, textbooks and assessment; management and administration programme; school improvement programme; and programme co-ordination and monitoring and evaluation. The work envisaged (particularly in the partnership between the Government of Finland and Ethiopia's Ministry of Education) sees special needs education being mainstreamed within GEQIP by all departments and partners involved in implementing these five focus areas.<sup>114</sup> However, this work is still only in its initial stages, so it remains to be seen whether this mainstreaming and co-operation will happen.

Sharing responsibility for the education for disabled people between ministries or departments can bring the advantage of encouraging more government sectors to focus on disability and to work together to provide holistic services for disabled people (education, rehabilitation, social welfare, employment, etc). It can also bring confusion as to who is doing what, the risk of duplication or omissions, etc. Countries that assign responsibility for disability issues to just one ministry equally run the risk that this ministry will not cope with the workload, and other ministries will fail to take disability issues on board. Neither Ethiopia nor Rwanda has yet found the ideal solution to these problems.

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<sup>111</sup> Karangwa and Wenceslas, 2008

<sup>112</sup> VSO Ethiopia, 2008, p.26

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Education of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2008) 'Special Needs Education Programme in Ethiopia. Programme document. February 2008'

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

## 5. Approaches to disabled learners' education

There is not yet a clear picture of exactly what services and activities (educational or other) exist for disabled people in Rwanda, and duplication and lack of co-operation are recurrent problems.<sup>115</sup>

While Ethiopia is in a similar situation, the SNE Program Strategy does at least provide a list of 31 organisations that promote inclusive education and support disabled students. The list is not comprehensive, for instance it does not include local NGOs with a small geographical focus, organisations that are mainstreaming disability without necessarily having specific disability programmes, or individuals working on or researching inclusive education and special needs education. The following table summarises the main areas of work (in relation to education) of the 31 organisations listed.<sup>116</sup>

Table 3: Summary of education work by 31 organisations, Ethiopia

Key area of work	Number of organisations engaged in this task
Advocacy, awareness raising, information dissemination on disability, child rights and education issues	11
Supporting/promoting inclusive education <sup>117</sup>	5
Teacher training/support (on disability, sign language, Braille, inclusive education, etc)	5
CBR linked with education <sup>118</sup>	4
Managing/supporting education in special schools	3
Supporting education for blind and visually impaired children	3
Producing or providing equipment and resources to support disabled learners	2
Sign language support for students	2
Assessing learning difficulties, special educational needs, etc	1
Education/rehabilitation for autistic children	1
Integrated kindergarten	1
Non-formal education	1
Promoting special units	1
Research, data collection and academic study in relation to education and disability, special needs education and inclusive education	1
Supporting cluster schools approach	1
Supporting policy development	1

Source: SNE Program Strategy, Ethiopia

The table must be treated as a snapshot of efforts happening in relation to education for disabled learners, not as an accurate survey of all such activities in Ethiopia. We may infer some trends from the information – such as the

<sup>115</sup> Thomas, 2005

<sup>116</sup> This information is taken from the SNE Program Strategy and represents the situation as of 2006. However, the analysis presented in this table is the current author's interpretation of the information given in the Strategy. It has not been possible for the current author to verify or update this information as of 2009.

<sup>117</sup> This does not include those organisations listed as "interested in" supporting inclusive education, as this implies they are not yet active in this area.

<sup>118</sup> This includes only the organisations that are listed as linking CBR with education, not those listed simply as working on CBR.



presence in Ethiopia of a relatively strong focus on advocacy, awareness-raising and teacher education about disability and inclusion issues; a mixture of support for segregated and inclusive education; and a rather limited emphasis on research or policy development. But further investigation would be needed to verify such trends.

Because of the lack of comprehensive mapping in either country, the following sections present examples of activities. These should not be interpreted as occurring on a nationwide scale – many activities involve small-scale and/or time-limited programmes.

## **5.1. Inclusive education projects**

### ***Inclusion of blind learners***

In Rwanda, MINEDUC state that blind and deaf learners are likely to need education in special schools/centres.<sup>119</sup> However, Rwanda has experience of successfully including blind learners in mainstream secondary school, and university (see below).<sup>120</sup>

GS Gahini is a regular rural secondary school that started admitting blind students in 1997, following negotiations between the head teacher, Rwanda Blind Union and MINEDUC. The school initially enrolled eight blind students and, following awareness raising work with parents, formed a parent fundraising committee which raised money for a resource and reading room for the students, and accommodation for support volunteers. The numbers of blind students increased.<sup>121</sup> Despite not having enough teachers who read Braille and there not always being enough support from fellow students and teachers, the school – with little external/government support – achieved much in terms of attitude change.

While this example still involves a small number of students, it shows what can be achieved – and perhaps indicates that Rwanda's education policies are not being bold and ambitious enough in their analysis of the potential for blind students to be educated outside special schools.

In Ethiopia, the Adaptive Technology Centre for the Blind in Addis Ababa undertakes computer training for blind people. They have supported visually impaired undergraduate and postgraduate students at Addis Ababa University to learn computing skills that will enhance their studies. The centre is also in a position to train school teachers in the use of computers with blind students, which should enable these students to benefit from the government's commitment to supply computers to all schools.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> See: [www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168](http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article168) [accessed March 2009].

<sup>120</sup> See: Karangwa 2003 and Karangwa 2008

<sup>121</sup> There were 42 students at the time of Thomas's study, 2005, p41

<sup>122</sup> Belay, 2004

### ***Inclusion of intellectually impaired learners***

Haile and Bogale<sup>123</sup> reported on a pilot inclusive education project in Ethiopia which had a specific focus on children with intellectual impairments. It sought primarily to increase the children's daily activity and social skills, support parents (many of whom were anxious about their children), and offer an example that could be adapted in other schools. Parents, Education Bureau personnel, teachers and children participated in a one-day awareness raising event, with a focus on inclusion and child rights. Sixteen teachers received a month of training on adapting their teaching methods, and an exchange visit to other schools was run for teachers, District Educational Bureau staff and parents.

The children with intellectual impairments took part primarily in music, arts, agriculture, sports and home economics lessons. The project's progress was monitored on a weekly basis by a team comprising teachers, parents, researchers, school director and education officials. They discussed problems and solutions. After a year, the project found a significant increase in teachers' willingness to teach children with intellectual impairment in their regular classes. The parents also stated that their children were more confident, more effective communicators and more able to use social skills.

### ***Inclusion at university level***

When the head teacher of GS Gahini secondary school in Rwanda (discussed above) moved to work as head of special needs education at KIE, he became part of a team of 12 educators and activists, mandated by the Minister of Education to facilitate the inclusion of disabled students into universities. Their task was to review university application processes and assess university equipment and adjustment needs, in order to enrol disabled students (particularly those blind students who were completing their secondary education at GS Gahini). Although 250 potential students were identified, the work was approached in phases. In 2008 – the first phase – 15 blind students, six deaf students and one physically impaired student began university courses in law, languages, journalism, social science, medical studies and education.

The government pays their fees and living costs while they study. Various awareness-raising activities have taken place, including drama staged by the association of disabled students. Resource rooms were opened for blind students at KIE and the University of Rwanda. Students using the resource rooms are able to access ICT facilities (computers, internet, screen readers, etc), which has enabled them to communicate more effectively with sighted peers/staff and gain skills that employers are looking for.<sup>124</sup>

### ***Other initiatives***

Ethiopia mainly has what Agegnehu calls "pockets of successful inclusive education attempts". The same is largely true of Rwanda. Initiatives include:

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<sup>123</sup> Haile and Bogale, 1999

<sup>124</sup> Unpublished transcript of group discussion with visually impaired students conducted by GeSCI (Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative), 2008.

- Leonard Cheshire Disability is starting an inclusive education programme (in the Murumba area of Rwanda).<sup>125</sup> Initially two primary schools and their communities are the focus of awareness-raising work around disabled people's right to education, community participation and social protection.
- Handicap National Action for Children with Disabilities is supporting disabled children in Ethiopia to attend school and improving physical accessibility and changing social attitudes. It is doing awareness raising, in-service teacher training and advocacy. It is also establishing resource centres at schools and providing home-based support for disabled learners.<sup>126</sup>
- Save the Children Norway, with its partners in Gondar, Northern Ethiopia has supported inclusive schools, organised an inclusive schools cluster centre and facilitated the training of resource teachers in sign language.

## 5.2. Inter-agency collaboration

In Rwanda, MINEDUC has established a new Task Force on inclusive education. Members include representatives from the government, KIE, international NGOs and disabled people's organisations. The Task Force provides a forum for dialogue on inclusive education. It was "set up to look for inclusive solutions for education" and "has the hope that by 2010 all teachers will have been sensitized to receive in class all children, without exception, and that parents will also have been sufficiently sensitized".<sup>127</sup> This represents perhaps the strongest statement yet by the government of its commitment to developing more inclusive forms of education.

In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education is also promoting partners meetings with different sectors, UN agencies, NGOs etc to discuss education and inclusion issues. One example of inter-agency collaboration has been a health and disability screening project within the education sector at regional level. The project pilots World Bank/OECD methodologies for screening and has been run by the Ministry of Education, but the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, and Health, have co-operated. Representatives from the various ministries have acknowledged the benefits of co-operating in this way for both data collection and interventions in relation to education and disability.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, World Vision highlight that collaboration for inclusive education/education for disabled learners in Ethiopia is still mainly small-scale and in need of further expansion.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>125</sup> See: [www.lcd-enar.org/rwanda\\_inclusive](http://www.lcd-enar.org/rwanda_inclusive) [accessed March 2009]

<sup>126</sup> World Vision, 2007

<sup>127</sup> See: [www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article262](http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?article262) [accessed March 2009].

<sup>128</sup> Elina Lehtomäki (2006) 'Support to education in Ethiopia'. Interview at a workshop of The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion Flagship in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6-8 December, 2006. See: [www.inclusionflagship.net/interview3\\_low.wmv](http://www.inclusionflagship.net/interview3_low.wmv)

<sup>129</sup> World Vision, 2007

### 5.3. Special schools and special classes/units

In both countries, segregated specialist provision is being supported alongside efforts to develop inclusive education. However, the challenges of providing special schools/classes/units within resource poor contexts is clearly seen in both countries.

The number of special schools in Rwanda has increased greatly in the last three years, to a current estimated total of 34 schools/centres. However, despite the increase, these facilities – which are mostly urban-based – accommodate only a small proportion of the numbers of children considered to have a disability or a special educational need. For instance, it is estimated that special schools reach just three per cent of potential deaf students in the country.<sup>130</sup> Special schools/centres in Rwanda receive little government support. The few special schools that are government-run mainly enrol children with visual and hearing impairments. The remaining special schools/centres are outside the government system, run by private or religious organisations. Some district authorities provide teaching staff for special schools, but they may lack training and awareness of disability issues and child-centred methodologies.<sup>131</sup> In addition, the national curriculum is not currently flexible enough to meet the learning needs of disabled students, and deaf students in particular.<sup>132</sup>

Ethiopia's regions are working on opening more special units and classes within mainstream schools.<sup>133</sup> For instance, Addis Ababa's Bureau of Education has supported the development of special classes and units, opened Braille libraries, and appointed special needs experts. The Bureau has been working on educating children with severe intellectual impairments in regular schools (with special classes/units). The special unit/classes, however, are still a long way from accommodating all of Ethiopia's disabled children. A further illustration of the impossibility of meeting the educational needs of all disabled children through segregated education is the example of Ethiopia's only special school for autistic children (which is not government run). In 2006 the school was able to enrol 60 students, but had a further 250 on the waiting list.<sup>134</sup>

Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy provides a breakdown of segregated education facilities, but acknowledges that the data is incomplete.

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<sup>130</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>131</sup> See: [http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/page\\_815.php](http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/page_815.php) [accessed March 2009].

<sup>132</sup> Karangwa and Kobusingye, 2007

<sup>133</sup> World Vision, 2007

<sup>134</sup> Morris, G (2006) 'Autism in Ethiopia - UNICEF supports country's first ever special school'

Table 4: Segregated education provision, Ethiopia

<b>Type of education provision</b>	<b>Number of classes/schools (primary)</b>	<b>Number of classes/schools (secondary)</b>
<b><i>Special classes/units*</i></b>	<b>137</b>	<b>2</b>
– for blind students	32	
– for deaf students	75	2
– for students with intellectual impairments	23	
– for mixed groups	7	
<b><i>Special schools</i></b>	<b>22</b>	
– for blind students	7	
– for deaf students	12	
– for students with intellectual impairments	1	
– ‘other’ facilities	2	

\* most special classes/units only cover grades 1-4

Source: SNE Program Strategy, Ethiopia

The original table shows how these figures are further broken down by region. However, many regions have very patchy data (either no data was available to the Strategy authors or no such schools/classes exist in the region – the distinction is not made in the table). What data is available suggests wide regional variations in the provision of segregated education for disabled children. Three regions (Addis Ababa, Amhara and Oromiya) appear to contain 84 per cent of the segregated education facilities in the country, with the other 16 per cent shared across eight regions.

#### **5.4. Improving special schools and building links with mainstream education**

Handicap International’s work in Rwanda focuses on developing sustainable links between special centres for disabled children and local mainstream schools, in order to increase the inclusion of disabled learners in their communities and mainstream schools.

The work recognises the resources and expertise within special schools and uses this to offer quality education for disabled learners through a wider range of options than just special schools. Handicap International has been raising the capacity of centres for children with profound and multiple learning disabilities to become resource centres for local schools that are trying to develop inclusive education approaches. Centre staff have received management training and staff at local mainstream schools have received disability awareness training and teacher training.

In Ethiopia, the School for the Deaf in Hosaina operates as a resource centre for other schools, as well as a special school. It employs many deaf teachers and staff members. It provides education at primary and secondary level, supports efforts to improve the quality of education for deaf learners in other schools, and supports the development of sign language in the country.<sup>135</sup>

## 5.5. Child-friendly schools

UNICEF has been supporting over 50 schools in Rwanda to become more child-friendly, in terms of teaching and learning methods, extra-curricular activities, school environment, etc. The government has embraced the concept as a key way to support learners with special educational needs,<sup>136</sup> aims to expand this approach to 400 schools nationwide by 2012, and has made child-friendly principles the standard for all primary schools (of which there are more than 2,000).<sup>137</sup> UNICEF states that these schools reach out to children who are often excluded, such as disabled children; aim to make schools physically accessible; actively look for out-of-school children; and train teachers in sign language and working with children with a range of impairments. They indicate that these schools are “the first in the nation to mainstream children with disabilities, currently serving some 7500”.<sup>138</sup> The programme is also trying to develop resource rooms for the assessment and support of children with special educational needs and for supporting the development of educational resources.<sup>139</sup>

A study by Karangwa *et al*<sup>140</sup> showed that Rwanda’s child-friendly schools were welcoming disabled learners but not necessarily making the kind of adjustments needed to ensure quality inclusive education. Nevertheless, drop-out rates generally fell in the schools and more pupils were being attracted to them.

## 5.6. Teacher education

### ***Pre-service and in-service teacher education***

Teacher training on special educational needs has been a key activity in Ethiopia since the 1990s. It has also been a particular focus for much of the international support given to special needs education and inclusive education in the country.

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<sup>135</sup> See: [www.fidida.fi/kuvagalleria/etiopia2/index.htm](http://www.fidida.fi/kuvagalleria/etiopia2/index.htm) and [www.cbm.org/en/projects/CBM\\_EV\\_EN\\_projects\\_21506.html](http://www.cbm.org/en/projects/CBM_EV_EN_projects_21506.html)

<sup>136</sup> Dr. Daphrosa Gahakwa, Minister of Education, presentation at International Conference on Education, 48th session, 25-28 November 2008, “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”. See: [www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Policy\\_Dialogue/48th\\_ICE/Messages/rwanda\\_MIN08.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Dialogue/48th_ICE/Messages/rwanda_MIN08.pdf)

<sup>137</sup> UNICEF Rwanda (no date) Transforming Tomorrow: Child-friendly schools in Rwanda. See: [www.unicef.de/fileadmin/content\\_media/Aktionen/schulen\\_fuer\\_afrika/RWANDA\\_Child.pdf](http://www.unicef.de/fileadmin/content_media/Aktionen/schulen_fuer_afrika/RWANDA_Child.pdf) (accessed March 2009)

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, p.11. This statistic is presented somewhat ambiguously, but is assumed to mean that 7,500 disabled children are in mainstream child-friendly schools.

<sup>139</sup> Personal communication, Evariste Karangwa, March 2009.

<sup>140</sup> Karangwa, Kaviira, Kaleeba and Gumirakiza, 2007

Ethiopia's SNE Program Strategy highlights that, until the early 1990s, teacher education about special educational needs was primarily conducted through short, NGO-funded workshops, which did not lead to lasting changes to teaching and learning processes. In 1992/3, with Finnish support, a six-month course was developed in Adama Teacher Training Institute. The course was aimed at developing teacher capacity which would support existing special schools and help with the development of more special classes and the inclusion of more learners within mainstream classes. This was followed with Finnish funding for courses at Addis Ababa University and the establishment of Sebeta Special Needs Teacher Training Centre (attached to the School for the Blind) in Oromia Regional State.<sup>141</sup>

Since then, other regular colleges and universities have offered special needs education courses to all students, and Sebeta continues to offer a ten-month course to qualified teachers. World Vision indicate that as a result of Sebeta's training programme, there has been an expansion in the number of special classes/units and thus the number of disabled children attending school. But it does not say whether there has been a similar improvement in the inclusion of disabled children within mainstream classes.<sup>142</sup> VSO's study<sup>143</sup> notes that the available facilities cannot train anywhere near enough teachers to meet the need for inclusive education. For instance, in Dessie *woreda* only two mainstream teachers a year are selected to train at Sebeta.

Most recently, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland is financing a project to support pre- and in-service teacher education and the creation of a multi-levelled support system (federal, regional, *woreda* and school levels) in special education needs, aimed at meeting the commitments in the SNE Program Strategy. It will involve collaboration between an Ethiopian and a Finnish university.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Peer support and action research***

Some district education offices and schools in Ethiopia conduct experience-sharing activities among teachers at cluster schools which enable them to discuss learners with special educational needs, ways of implementing inclusive education, disability rights, etc.<sup>145</sup> However, the cluster school system is currently not effectively supporting training for teachers on inclusive education.<sup>146</sup>

Save the Children Norway has also used action research to support teachers' capacity to make schools more inclusive in Ethiopia. The action research has been part of a wider project that had several components: a CBR programme in partnership with a local NGO; early childhood development initiative; teachers' action research; training resource teachers on teaching children with

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<sup>141</sup> Ministry of Education (Ethiopia), 2006

<sup>142</sup> World Vision 2007

<sup>143</sup> VSO Ethiopia, 2008

<sup>144</sup> See: <http://www.jyu.fi/hallinto/uniservices/en/news/special-needs-education-programme-to-ethiopia> [accessed March 2009].

<sup>145</sup> World Vision, 2007

<sup>146</sup> VSO Ethiopia, 2008

special educational needs, who then train teachers in school clusters (the clusters contain primary schools and alternative basic education centres). The action research process involved teachers investigating barriers to learners' presence, participation and achievement and trying out solutions. The activities led to some teachers submitting a proposal to their school administration to mobilise resources for the inclusion of disabled children and to request more specific training on disability issues. It also helped the teachers to develop an understanding of the importance of involving children in any efforts to tackle exclusion.<sup>147</sup>

In Rwanda, Handicap International has introduced another approach to peer support in teacher education, through a project to share experiences internationally. The project – 'Inclusion Rwanda' – involves teachers from the UK visiting mainstream and special schools in Rwanda, where they work alongside local teaching staff for one week. Teachers from both countries share their experiences and learn from each other about practical and policy solutions for the education of disabled children. In 2008, eight UK teachers were involved, including head teachers, special educational needs co-ordinators, a language teacher and a teacher of autistic children. The project will continue in 2009, with an expected 15 UK teachers participating.

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<sup>147</sup> Shenkuti and Focas Licht, 2005



## Conclusion

This paper has summarised data gathered on the scale and cause of educational marginalisation of disabled people in Ethiopia and Rwanda. It reviewed a selection of education policies and plans in relation to their focus on disabled people, and offered examples of actions being taken to enable the education of disabled people. Both countries can claim achievements in the education of disabled learners and in moving towards more inclusive visions for education – but much remains to be done.

### **Statistics**

Statistics on disability in Rwanda and Ethiopia – and on the presence, participation or achievement of disabled children in education – are unreliable. It has not been possible to establish accurately the number of disabled children in segregated special education, in mainstream schools or in alternative forms of education. This is a widespread problem across Southern countries. If the EFA goals are to be achieved, greater efforts are needed to monitor the number of disabled children attending mainstream schools, as well as the number who drop out or fail to achieve. The current lack of data, however, should not be used as an excuse to delay the start of initiatives to support disabled learners.

### **Policy development**

Education policies and plans often do not reflect what is happening on the ground. They tend to be influenced by Northern approaches to special needs education and inclusive education, and draw only limited inspiration from the country's own culture and context. This is evident in the case of Ethiopia and Rwanda. As well as the lack of statistical data in the two countries, there is insufficient recording of the views and experiences of key education stakeholders (children, teachers, parents) and limited evidence of such information being used in the development of policies and plans.

Gaps clearly exist in education provision for disabled learners. However, snapshots of projects suggest that progress may be happening 'behind the scenes' that planners and implementers could learn from and build on. However, information about these projects is hard to find. Investment in such documentation would complement the current focus on simply collecting statistics. Statistics show *what* is happening but do not help explain *why* or *how* the situation arose, and thus how to bring about change. Non-statistical information, in greater amounts and of higher quality, could be gathered and documented through more systematic use of participatory activities (such as the action research that Save the Children piloted in Ethiopia; or the development of *community-based* EMIS or of whole-school/community improvement processes like those suggested in the 'Index for Inclusion').

### **Conceptual confusion**

Disability tends not to be *explicitly* mentioned in the education policies and plans of both countries. This seems to be because policy-makers are trying to develop approaches that support all marginalised groups (rather than equating special needs education or inclusive education solely with disability);

and not because disabled learners have been forgotten. However, to make sure they are not forgotten, implementers may still need greater clarity as to how disabled people fit within these broader groups of marginalised learners and learners with special educational needs. Clearer explanations are needed of *how* the governments expect implementers to analyse and find solutions to barriers to learning and participation – particularly at the school/community level.

Understandings of education concepts vary between and within countries. Education policies and plans in Ethiopia and Rwanda have attempted to explain the direction their education sectors should take to ensure education for learners with special educational needs. However, clarity on how policy makers interpret the key concepts of special needs education and inclusive education remains elusive – more so in Rwanda than Ethiopia. Conceptual clarity is needed before effective solutions to educational exclusion can be achieved, but such clarity need not mean imposing one internationally accepted interpretation. It could mean supporting each country to develop conceptual interpretations that build on positive elements in their existing cultures and contexts, making the interpretations easier for stakeholders to understand or accept.

International education movements and commitments may be having negative effects on the education of disabled and other marginalised learners in Ethiopia and Rwanda. The weakness of the EFA goals in relation to disability issues is being reflected in national education policies and plans. There is a risk that countries are putting all their efforts into preparing policies/plans that match international expectations, which are themselves far from perfect. Governments, instead, should be encouraged to develop more locally appropriate responses to the challenges faced by marginalised groups in education. There is also a need for clearer and more forceful indicators for progress and impact on disabled people's education – at the levels of national policies/plans and global commitments such as EFA. We will not achieve education for *all* disabled people unless those monitoring EFA progress are setting relevant indicators and reminding governments that progress on this matter is essential. Constant reflection on the meaning of *all* is needed.

### ***Focus on inclusion***

Neither Ethiopia's nor Rwanda's government presents a vision of inclusive education for *all* learners within mainstream settings. Both make provisions for some degree of segregated education (in special school or special units/classes). This raises the question of whether national policies and plans are being ambitious enough when it comes to inclusive education – especially in light of the focus on inclusion laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Examples of inclusive education exist in both countries. A key challenge remains how to turn these isolated examples into nationwide movements that genuinely ensure education for all – and not just for the duration of a donor's funding. Documenting, debating and building on existing achievements in inclusive education are therefore important priorities for Ethiopia and Rwanda.

***Recommendations for governments, NGOs and the international community***

- Increase efforts to monitor the number of disabled children attending mainstream schools, and the number who drop out or fail to achieve.
- Ensure that the lack of data does not become an excuse for delaying interventions for disabled people's education.
- Qualitative data should be collected – through more systematic use of participatory research – to complement statistical data.
- Support implementers to understand how disabled learners fit within the wider groups of marginalised or special needs learners.
- Develop forceful process and impact indicators for measuring progress on education for disabled learners at national and international levels.
- Develop greater clarity on interpretations of special needs education and inclusive education at the country level.
- Build on local/national culture to develop contextually appropriate solutions to educational marginalisation, rather than relying on international/Northern perspectives and approaches.
- Review national and international education policies and plans in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to make sure they are forcefully promoting inclusive education.
- Document and share experiences of inclusive education to enable expansion of successful initiatives.

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*All website addresses in this bibliography were correct as of 5 April 2009.*



## **Appendix 1: Key concepts**

### ***Disability***

This paper views disability from a social model perspective – disability is *not* an individual problem or personal circumstance, but an issue of social exclusion. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises that:

“disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (preamble)

The Convention also commits governments to “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels” (Article 24). In relation to education, a social model approach places the onus on the education system to change and become flexible and welcoming to all learners. It moves us away from education approaches based on a medical model which are often characterised by segregation and/or an expectation that the learner should change to fit into the existing system.

### ***Inclusive education***

Interpretations of inclusive education vary greatly, especially between countries. It is often seen as primarily about the inclusion of disabled learners within mainstream education. Increasingly, however, it is defined as a process of whole system change, based around identifying barriers to and support for the presence, participation and achievement of all learners within a mainstream education system. Other interpretations exist, which involve for instance the use of special classes or units within mainstream schools. However, this is considered by many not to be inclusion, as it still involves elements of segregation. Further debates exist around the differences between inclusive education and integrated education. The former is often taken to mean that the education system, school, teaching methods, etc, adapt to suit the needs of the learner; while the latter is taken to mean placing children in mainstream settings, but leaving them to cope with and try to adjust to an fundamentally unchanged education system or school. Again there is no universal agreement on this.

### ***Special needs education***

For many, special needs education is synonymous with the education of disabled people, with the frequent assumption that every disabled learner automatically has a special educational need. Over time broader definitions have developed. Many now view ‘people with special educational needs’ as including anyone who experiences difficulties with the learning process that require some sort of special educational response. Those difficulties need not be linked with an impairment, may not be permanent, and may occur at any point in a person’s education. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that not every disabled learner necessarily has a special educational need – they may just have the same needs as every learner for a generally better quality teaching and learning experience. The nature of special needs education has also

changed over time – from being mainly delivered through special schools, units or classes, to being delivered within mainstream schools.

***The importance of clear definitions within policies***

Often the terms inclusive education and special needs education are used interchangeably, but these two terms do not refer to exactly the same education approach. While it is too extensive a debate to cover here, some key differences that are relevant to the discussions in this paper include:

<b>Inclusive education</b>	<b>Special needs education</b>
seeks to avoid segregation	does not preclude the use of segregated education settings
seeks to develop an education system that is constantly evolving, to improve presence, participation and achievement for every learner, whether or not they have been categorised as having a special educational need (in relation to disability, this helps promote a social model approach)	focuses on improving education for those children who have been identified or categorised as having a particular need
consists of much more than just a special needs education component	could, in some interpretations, be considered a component of an inclusive education system

This paper does not advocate for any particular interpretation of inclusive education or special needs education. Instead it highlights that there *are* vital differences in understanding which policy-makers need to acknowledge and explain, if they are to develop policies and plans that can be successfully implemented. Success or failure might depend on how implementers interpret the ‘instructions’ given in a policy/plan.

Donors and advisers with whom implementers work may be offering contradictory opinions, so a nation’s policy-makers need to guide implementers through this minefield of concepts and terminology. If a policy or plan does not clearly explain what it means by inclusive education or special needs education (or indeed any other educational concept), different implementers may move forward in different directions, based on their own understanding of the concept. Those different directions may not always complement each other or match what the government had in mind.

## Appendix 2: Census data on impairments

### *Ethiopia*<sup>148</sup>

Type of impairment	Percentage of population
"Totally blind"	0.2%
"Partially blind"	0.4%
"Hearing problem"	0.2%
"Hearing and speaking"	0.1%
"Leg problem"	0.4%
"Hand or arm problem"	0.2%
"Leprosy"	0.1%
"Metal problem" <sup>149</sup>	0.1%
"Other disability"	0.1%
"Multiple disability"	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.9%</b>

### *Rwanda*<sup>150</sup>

Type of impairment	Percentage of population
"physical impairment affecting limbs"	2.1%
"mental deficiency"	0.2%
blind	0.2%
deaf	0.3%
other impairments or impairments not specified	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.8%</b>

Note: Different interpretations of these impairment categories are likely to have affected the reporting and recording processes in both countries.

<sup>148</sup> Ethiopia Central Statistical Agency, Population and Housing Census of 1994 website. See: [www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%201994/survey0/index.html](http://www.csa.gov.et/surveys/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%201994/survey0/index.html)

<sup>149</sup> It is not clear whether this refers to intellectual impairment, or to mental health issues, or both.

<sup>150</sup> Republic of Rwanda (2003a and b). Additionally, Thomas (2005, p30) cites a survey by FARG [National Assistance Fund for Needy Survivors of Genocide and Massacres in Rwanda] estimating 300,000 disabled genocide survivors, including 3,000 who were blind and 4,000 who were deaf.

### Appendix 3: Disabled children in mainstream schools supported by Handicap International, Rwanda

District	Sector	School	Visually impaired		Hearing impaired		Physically impaired		Intellectually impaired		Epilepsy		Albino		Trauma		Total			
			F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	Total	
Gasabo	Gatsata	Gihogwe	0	4	0	1	12	13	6	9	2	1	1	2	0	0	21	30	51	
		Gatsata	7	9	5	1	5	5	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	19	18	37	
	Jaban	Jabana	6	6	2	2	1	2	8	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	19	13	32	
		Kabuye	2	2	0	0	6	3	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	12	9	21	
		Bweramvura	2	3	1	1	2	8	2	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	7	18	25	
	<b>Total district Gasabo</b>			<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>166</b>
Muhanga	Nyamabuye	Gahogo	2	1	1	3	8	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	11	23
		Biti	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	7
		Gitarmama	0	3	0	0	1	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	5	9	14	
		Nyabisindu	3	3	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	7	6	13	
		Kabgayi a	0	0	0	1	1	3	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	6	5	11	
		Kabgayi b	0	1	3	2	4	4	2	1	3	3	0	0	1	3	13	14	27	
	Cyeza	Kivumu	4	3	2	2	7	8	15	17	3	4	0	0	0	2	31	36	67	

	Shyogwe	Adepr	0 1	0 0	2 5	2 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	5 6	11
	Nyarusenge	Nyarusange	0 4	0 1	5 7	1 6	1 1	0 0	0 0	7 19	26
<b>Total district Muhanga</b>			<b>9 16</b>	<b>6 9</b>	<b>29 37</b>	<b>29 33</b>	<b>13 10</b>	<b>0 0</b>	<b>3 5</b>	<b>89 110</b>	<b>199</b>

Rulindo	Shyorongi	Rutonde	0 0	5 7	5 9	0 0	0 1	0 0	0 1	10 18	28
	Bishoki	Rulindo	2 5	2 0	10 7	4 0	0 1	0 0	0 0	18 13	31
<b>Total district Rulindo</b>			<b>2 5</b>	<b>7 7</b>	<b>15 16</b>	<b>4 0</b>	<b>0 2</b>	<b>0 0</b>	<b>0 1</b>	<b>28 31</b>	<b>59</b>

Nyarugenge	Nyamirambo	St Charles Iwanga	6 3	0 1	0 1	2 2	0 0	0 0	0 0	8 7	15
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Ngororero	Nyange	Nyange a	0 2	1 2	0 0	0 1	1 0	0 0	0 0	2 5	7
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Kicukuru	Gikondo	Kinunga	4 3	2 3	4 2	2 1	0 1	0 0	0 0	12 10	22
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Source: Handicap International records, April 2009

## Appendix 4: Key responsibilities outlined in special needs education policy/strategy

Ministry/ department/ institution	Ethiopia – SNE Program Strategy	Rwanda – SNE Policy
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure SNE is part of all education programmes and at all levels (including technical/ vocational and alternative education)</li> <li>• collect/analyse data</li> <li>• prepare guidelines and education materials</li> <li>• co-ordinate donor efforts</li> <li>• monitor, evaluate, report</li> <li>• work with Regional Education Bureaux (REBs) and beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overall policy direction</li> <li>• allocation of financial and human resources</li> <li>• quality assurance</li> <li>• capacity development</li> <li>• monitoring and evaluation of results</li> <li>• administrative support</li> <li>• delegate responsibilities and roles</li> </ul>
Local education departments	<p>REBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with MoE; dialogue with beneficiaries, NGOs, etc</li> <li>• plan, budget, manage strategy implementation</li> <li>• ensure SNE is part of all education programmes</li> <li>• disseminate information, share good practice</li> <li>• training and capacity building (teachers, managers, woreda-level staff, etc)</li> <li>• provide materials/equipment</li> <li>• maintain data, give to MoE</li> <li>• monitor/evaluate</li> <li>• assign expert to co-ordinate SNE work in region</li> </ul> <p>Woreda/subcity education offices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan and manage strategy implementation</li> <li>• disseminate information, share good practice</li> <li>• raise awareness with parents and community</li> <li>• teacher capacity building</li> <li>• support schools and cluster centres; create resource centres in cluster centres</li> <li>• maintain data, give to REB</li> <li>• monitor/evaluate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prioritise policy strategies</li> <li>• advise MoE on the implementation of basic education programmes</li> <li>• provide data on children with special educational needs</li> <li>• analyse reports about basic education from districts</li> <li>• support, supervise, monitor, evaluate complementary basic education programmes</li> <li>• identify, document numbers, location and situations of disadvantaged children</li> <li>• support and participate in mobilisation for basic education</li> </ul>
Teacher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthen SNE courses; work with MoE, REB, etc</li> <li>• support schools and cluster centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organise training for instructors/teachers in complementary basic education programmes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support professional staff at regional, woreda and school level to implement strategy</li> <li>• include students with SEN in programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review teacher education curriculum to include SNE/inclusive education and complementary basic education approaches</li> <li>• train/retrain teachers, tutors and centre co-ordinating tutors on methodologies and skills for managing basic education</li> </ul>
Stakeholders, beneficiaries, parents, community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• send children to school, tell school about special needs</li> <li>• parent-teacher associations</li> <li>• comment on plans, make recommendations</li> <li>• raise public awareness; advocacy</li> <li>• help collect/share information</li> </ul>	<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure all children receive basic education; understand its value and provide basic requirements</li> <li>• with deaf children learn/use sign language</li> </ul> <p>NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help establish complementary centres; community mobilisation; needs assessment</li> <li>• provide assistive devices</li> <li>• help develop teaching and learning materials</li> <li>• finance activities of complementary programmes</li> <li>• share experiences and lessons</li> </ul>
Ministry of Health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health services to eradicate diseases that cause impairment; immunisation certificates for children</li> </ul>
Ministry of Infrastructure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure accessible public buildings; work closely with Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs</li> </ul>
Ministry of Gender		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liaise with MoE regarding engaging communities in identifying children with special educational needs and addressing legal issues affecting those disadvantaged in education</li> </ul>
Ministry of Public, Service, Skills Development, Vocational Training/Labour		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure appropriate policies, codes of conduct and programmes to combat discrimination against learners with special educational needs and other disadvantaged groups</li> </ul>
Curriculum and examination departments		<p>Rwanda National curriculum Development Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review basic education syllabi; ensure its flexibility; consult stakeholders</li> </ul> <p>National Examination Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set and manage standardised</li> </ul>

		exams to identify learners' strengths and weakness
Inspectors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor and supervise special schools/centres and mainstream schools</li> </ul>
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan and manage strategy implementation</li> <li>• raise awareness with parents and community</li> <li>• identify special needs; organise resource rooms</li> <li>• ensure trained staff and facilities/equipment are available</li> <li>• include SNE in teachers' workplans</li> <li>• work with education offices, teacher educators, cluster schools, etc, to raise teacher awareness</li> <li>• maintain data, give to woreda education offices</li> <li>• monitor/evaluate</li> </ul>	