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The Right to Education: Challenges and  
Perspectives on Inclusive Primary  
Education for Children with Disabilities in  
Rwanda.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In 2008 Rwanda has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which ensures the right to inclusive education in for children with disabilities in its Article 24. This thesis investigates the gap between the human rights obligation of Rwanda in terms of education for children with disabilities and its practical implementation. Although progress on the policy level as well as the practical implementation of these policies has been made in Rwanda, many challenges remain concerning inclusive education for children with disabilities. From collected field research data on the experiences of children, parents, teachers as well as disability organisations, challenges such as teacher shortages and teacher expertise, negative attitudes towards disability, lack of adequate infrastructure and inaccessible health services were identified. Furthermore, from policy analysis it became clear that policies are lacking conceptual and strategic clarity. In conclusion, this thesis recognises the progress already made by Rwanda towards education for children with disabilities; however the government as well as other stakeholders must continue the process of the progressive realisation of the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities in Rwanda.



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## TABLE OF ACRONYMS

12YBE	12 Years Basic Education
9YBE	Nine Years Basic Education
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EFA	Education For All
EFA	Education For All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
HI	Handicap International
HVP	Home de la Vierge des Pauvres
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCPD	National Council of Persons with Disabilities
NUDOR	National Union of Disabilities' Organisations of Rwanda
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OP-CRPD	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
RUB	Rwandan Union of the Blind
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UCC	Ubumwe Community Centre
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Funds
VSO	Volunteers Overseas
UCC	Ubumwe Community Centre
HVP	Home de la Vierge des Pauvres
HI	Handicap International
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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*“We believe that education is not a luxury, nor should it be viewed as a preserve for the privileged few, but a right – a right for all Rwandans.” – Paul Kagame<sup>1</sup>(w.y.)*

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The right to education has been for many years and still is a world-wide human rights issue. Millions of children are still excluded from education “*because of disadvantages such as poverty, gender, location and ethnicity*”.<sup>2</sup> Others are discriminated and excluded within education or do not have the chance to finish the education they have started. Although significant progress has been made over the last decade, a lot still has to be done on a world-wide scale to ensure the right to education for all.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recently stated that “*this is particularly so for the millions of children with disabilities and those living in complex emergency situations*”.<sup>4</sup>

The right to education for children with disabilities was reinforced in 2006 by the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its Article 24, which ensures the right to ‘inclusive education’ for all. A total of 156 countries have currently ratified this Convention, including many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>5</sup> However, in this region people and children with disabilities still face serious discrimination and stigmatisation because of traditional beliefs on the cause of disability: children with disabilities are seen as the result of “*witchcraft, curses or*

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<sup>1</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, Rwanda – Nine Years Basic Education, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZC-V0OT7Tk> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, 2015, p. 75, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Equatorial Guinea have undertaken no action; Central African Republic, Cameroon and Chad are only signatory States Parties. All the other Sub-Saharan African countries have ratified the CRPD. Cfr. UNOHCHR, Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard, available at <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

*punishment from God, the anger of ancestral spirits, bad omens, reincarnation, heredity, perceived incestuous relationships, and the mother's 'wrongdoing'".<sup>6</sup>*

One of these Sub-Saharan African countries which has committed to the right to inclusive education through the CRPD, is Rwanda. In Rwanda as well, children with disabilities are still reported to be perceived as a punishment and a shame for the family.<sup>7</sup> It is in this context that this Master's thesis will investigate the current educational situation of children with disabilities in Rwanda.

### **1.1 Rwanda's Progress in Education**

Most people mainly know Rwanda from the genocide that happened in the country from April to July 1994, during which almost one million Rwandans were killed.<sup>8</sup> The country is still thought of by many as a dangerous and poor region in Africa. However, over the last decade it has made tremendous progress in various fields and it is proving to be an economic example for other developing countries in Africa.<sup>9,10</sup> Paul Kagame, former leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front and current president of Rwanda since 2000, is a praised man among many Rwandans and is seen as a visionary leader.<sup>11</sup> His government upholds a strong anti-corruption policy and created transparent government structures.<sup>11</sup> Under his leadership, Rwanda has seen a strong economic growth and substantial reduction of poverty.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, especially coming from the

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<sup>6</sup> Tsegaye, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. infra chapter 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Rwandan Genocide took place from April 7 1994 until July 1994. It resulted out of a decades-long tension between the two biggest ethnic groups in Rwanda: the Hutu's and the Tutsi's. The Genocide started after Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana was killed when his plane was shot down in Kigali on April 6, 1994. The day after this, extreme Hutu forces began the slaughtering of Tutsi's and moderate Hutus. In total, an estimated number of 800,000 Rwandans were killed during the genocide. In July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Force, led by current president Paul Kagame, recaptured Kigali and forced the extreme Hutu interim-government to step down. Source: no author, 'Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened', in *BBC News*, 17 May 2011, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13431486> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Chiu, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Crisafulli & Redmond, 2014, pp. 9-26.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, p. 103.

Western world, there are emerging critiques about violations of freedom of speech and other human rights<sup>13,14</sup>, in which President Kagame is called a repressor or a dictator. Furthermore, political competition and freedom of speech are being jeopardized with the excuse of protecting national security.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, economic growth and the practice of good governance in Rwanda have brought forward a noteworthy progress in fields such as health care<sup>16</sup> and education<sup>17</sup>: the country increased its primary school net enrolment ratio from 72.9% in 2000 to 96.9% in 2013.<sup>18</sup> This makes that Rwanda has one of the highest net enrolment ratios for primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>19</sup> Although these numbers are promising and show a huge improvement in comparison to the past, they should be carefully interpreted and compared with other numbers such as completion rates. For example, completion rates have shown no improvement since 2009, with even a small decline from 74.5% in 2009, to 69.0% in 2013<sup>20</sup>. Although this can partially be explained by the former mentioned increase in enrolment rates, Rwanda still faces major challenges in education in terms of drop-outs and repetition rates.<sup>21</sup> Abbott et al. stated that these major challenges include “*encouraging parents to send children to school at the right age and making adequate provision for children living with physical, sensory and learning disabilities*”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Mephram, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2015: Country Chapter Rwanda, 2015, available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/rwanda> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Rosenberg, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, Education for All 2015 National Review, 2015, p. 25, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002317/231725e.pdf> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Idem, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> EFA Data Visualisation Tool, at <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2015/education-all-2000-2015-achievements-and-challenges#region-report-dataviz> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013 Education Statistical Yearbook, 2014, p. 12, available at [http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user\\_upload/2013\\_Rwanda\\_Education\\_Statistics.pdf](http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/2013_Rwanda_Education_Statistics.pdf) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> Abbott et al., 2014, p. 120.

## 1.2 Rwanda's Education for Children with Disabilities

Elaborating on the latter challenge, if overall education is improving for children in Rwanda the question can be raised if it is also improving for children with disabilities, as an improvement of overall education does not necessarily mean that more vulnerable learners such as children with disabilities benefit from this progress. For example, it is shown that *“although the link between education and economic growth implied by the human capital discourse has brought attention and resources to the education sector, the eventual consequences of understanding education as an investment, might be in conflict with the right to education”*<sup>23</sup> , and that, in the case of Rwanda, *“changing education policy priorities are effecting girls, orphans and vulnerable children”*.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, Rwanda has ratified multiple international treaties as well as various national laws and policies, in which the rights of children with disabilities are ensured.<sup>25</sup> These documents are reflected in related policies and *“political leader's views and public speeches”*<sup>26</sup>, but are they also reflected in the socio-political reality on the ground? The research question of this Master's thesis is therefore:

***‘To what extent is there a gap between the legal framework to which Rwanda has committed regarding inclusive education and the reality in community and schools from the perspective of key stakeholders, such as children, parents and teachers? Furthermore, which are the causes of this gap and in which aspects of education is it most prominent?’***

Finally, the overall purpose of the Master's thesis is to provide a structured and informative research work which could help *inter alia* academics, implementers and other stakeholders to be informed about and act upon the current situation of education for children with disabilities in Rwanda.

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<sup>23</sup> Ron-Balsera, 2011, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> Ron-Balsera, 2011, p. 275.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. infra chapter 4.

<sup>26</sup> Karangwa, 2014, p. 46.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTS**

The following chapter will describe the methodology and concepts which are used in this Master's thesis.

### **2.1 Methodology**

As the methodology is an important aspect of every scientific research work, first the structure of this thesis and thereafter the research methods used for collecting data will be elaborated on.

To investigate the situation of inclusive education in Rwanda, the second part of this chapter will first describe different concepts relevant to inclusive education. Next, an overview of the current educational system in Rwanda will be described, as this concerns important contextual information. In the fourth chapter, the international as well as the national legal framework concerning the right to education for children with disabilities in Rwanda will be set out. The fifth chapter will cover the data found on the field research, which concerns the opinions and experiences of key stakeholders on education for children with disabilities in Rwanda. Finally, the information from the first five chapters will be brought together in a comprehensive overview of achievements, challenges and recommendations on inclusive education in Rwanda in chapter six.

This thesis will make use of a qualitative research method, in which existing literature as well as data collected on a three-week long field research trip in Rwanda will be used. Qualitative research was chosen because the researcher wants to “*understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it*”.<sup>27</sup> According to Parkinson and Drislane qualitative research is “*research using methods such as participant observation or case*

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<sup>27</sup> Hatch, 2002, p. 7.

*studies which result in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or a practice”*.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, participant observation as well as group discussions were used during the research field trip to collect data on the practice of and perceptions on inclusive education in Rwanda. These practices and perceptions are important, as literature has showed that *“social abstractions like education are best understood through the experiences of the individuals whose work and lives are the stuff upon which the abstractions are built”*.<sup>29,30</sup> The next paragraph will explain how the data on these experiences was collected.

### 2.1.1 Participant Observation

The field research was conducted through qualitative participant observation in which the researcher went to Rwanda and visited schools, talked to the children, teachers and parents there, got a tour of the school buildings and attended some classes. Participant observation is an often used method in qualitative research.<sup>31,32</sup> Literature states that *“the ability of participant observation to provide explanation, context, causation, and confirmation means that it is often a useful element to include in a mixed method study”*.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, here the findings of the participant observations will be included in the thesis together with existing literature and consequently compared with the findings of this literary research.

The researcher chose to do participant observation, as it allowed her to *“integrate the observed behaviour”*<sup>34</sup> – or rather experiences of key stakeholders in this case – *“into its physical context”*<sup>35</sup>, i.e. the school. It was indeed important not only to discover the actual experiences, but also to observe and be involved in the environment in which

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<sup>28</sup> Parkinson and Drislane, Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences, 2002, available at <http://bitbucket.icaap.org/dict.pl?term=QUALITATIVE%20RESEARCH> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Seidman, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ferraroti, 1981, pp. 19-27.

<sup>31</sup> De Walt & De Walt, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Guest et al., 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 83.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, p. 81.



people are experiencing these. Due to time constraints, the actual ‘participation’ was however short-lived and was limited to only one morning or one afternoon for each school. By being in Rwanda for three weeks and engaging with the local population as much as possible, the researcher collected some participant observational data as well.

### 2.1.2 Qualitative Group Discussions

Seidman stated: *“The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organisation, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the “others” who make up the organisation or carry out the process”*.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the author has sought to find out these experiences by visiting the five school projects of Handicap International (HI) and by conducting informal discussions with groups of children, parents, teachers or a mix of these, within their own school community setting. Loose qualitative interviews<sup>37</sup> or discussions were used during the participant observation because these are a good method to use when the aim of the research is to *“integrate multiple perspectives”*<sup>38</sup>, i.e. the experiences of the key stakeholders in inclusive education. The main purpose of these interviews was not to test hypotheses, but rather came from an *“an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience”*.<sup>39</sup>

The interviewed groups were mostly made up of around 10 to 20 people, with the exception of the schools in Bunyonga and Gacurabwenge, where all different groups were brought together in one room. Two children at Home de la Vierge des Pauvres (HVP) Gatagara school, have also shared their experiences. In the five inclusive school projects set up by HI, the author was accompanied by an HI employee that had organised the visits and acted as a translator for people who wished to speak in their native language, Kinyarwanda. In this way, the risk of persons not speaking up because they were not confident enough to speak in English or French, was downsized. The

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<sup>36</sup> Idem, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Flick, 2009, p. 149-175.

<sup>38</sup> Weiss, 1994, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Seidman, 2006, p. 9.

questions asked were all open questions and were tailored to confirm findings in the previously studied literature and more importantly, to close the gaps in this literature by investigating subjects on which existing literature is scarce.<sup>40</sup> The discussions were semi-structured because of the expectation that the subject's opinions will be more openly expressed this way<sup>41</sup> and to leave enough room for the participants to bring up their own subjects or priorities. A portable computer was used to note down and record the discussions.

Furthermore, not only group meetings but also individual discussions were held in the capital Kigali where the author met with several individuals from disability organisations and with experts in the field of inclusive education in Rwanda, which can be found under 'contributors' in the section below. These 'expert interviews' were used to complement the data found in the group discussions and literature.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.1.3 Limitations

Some pitfalls in the methodology of this research are to be mentioned as well. Reflexivity, in which the researcher acknowledges and underlines the influence of his/her presence on the research data, is indeed crucial in qualitative research.<sup>43</sup>

Research showed that participant observation is often "*highly practitioner-sensitive*"<sup>44</sup>: for example in this case, the fact that the researcher is a person from 'the West' could bias the answers of the participants in the sense that they e.g. could try to give answers which they think the researcher would like to hear. In addition, by holding the discussions in a group setting, some participants could 'hold back' while expressing their opinions, out of fear to be judged by others. This was especially the case when school authorities were present.

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<sup>40</sup> Birks et al., 2007, p. 152.

<sup>41</sup> Flick, 1994, p. 150.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, p. 168.

<sup>43</sup> Van Zwieten & Plochg, 2011, p. 77.

<sup>44</sup> Guest et al., 2013, p. 84.

Participant observation and group discussions may sometimes be “*difficult to generalise from*”<sup>45,46</sup>: the visited school projects were all projects by HI. This means that all the participants more or less got similar education and training on inclusive education which obviously influenced their opinions towards inclusive education. For a more comprehensive result, further research should be undertaken in other projects by other organisations, as well as ‘plain’ mainstream schools where no projects at all are running. This was not possible for this research due to time constraints and lack of resources.

Finally, readers should bear in mind that the Rwandan people can be reserved when it comes to giving criticism. It is known that in Rwanda, freedom of expression is quite a sensitive issue<sup>47,48</sup>: often people are afraid to criticise the government – esp. when it concerns the president<sup>49</sup>. Also, in the aftermath of the genocide, some claim it is important for the people of Rwanda to show the rest of the world that Rwanda is doing well.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, the author was able to collect various interesting opinions and constructive criticisms for the purpose of this research.

#### 2.1.4 Contributors

The organisations and institutions which have given their expertise and opinions on the topic of inclusive education in Rwanda, include Rwandan Union of the Blind (RUB), Christian Blind Mission (CBM), Handicap International (HI), National Union of Disabilities’ Organisations of Rwanda (NUDOR), National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and Evariste Karangwa, the dean of the School of Inclusive & Special Needs Education at the College of Education in Kigali. The author also visited

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<sup>45</sup> Idem, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Weiss, 1994, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> Kinzer, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Bhagwat, 2014, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 14.

<sup>50</sup> This was told by an anonymous Rwandan during the field research trip.

the Brothers of Charity's HVP Gatagara, the first centre for children with disabilities in Rwanda and the Ubumwe Community Centre (UCC), which is an inclusive school. Additionally, the author visited five inclusive school projects which were set up by HI: one school<sup>51</sup> in Rubavu district and four schools<sup>52</sup> in Kamonyi district.

## 2.2 Concepts

Some key concepts which will be widely used in this Master's thesis have to be explained more precisely, as often different interpretations of the same concept exist. In this case, the concepts 'disability' and 'inclusion' are to be defined more thoroughly.

### 2.2.1 Disability

Different models of disability are used by people of different occupations, organisations and even cultures.<sup>53</sup> Roughly speaking, two main models can be distinguished: the individual (medical) model and the social model of disability.<sup>54,55</sup> However, there are also a number of hybrid models like the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health<sup>56</sup>, which is the World Health Organisation's framework for measuring health and disability.<sup>57</sup>

According to the individual or medical model of disability, disability is stated to be "*caused by physical impairments resulting from disease, injury or health conditions*".<sup>58</sup> This results in policies and practices in which "*interventions are primarily medical, including rehabilitation and institutional care, as well as social assistance programmes*

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<sup>51</sup> Rubavu II Primary School.

<sup>52</sup> Masogwe Primary School, Buguri Primary School, Bunyonga Primary school, Gacurabwenge Primary School.

<sup>53</sup> McEwan & Butler, 2007, pp. 448-466.

<sup>54</sup> Oliver, 1990, p.1-6.

<sup>55</sup> Burchardt, 2004, pp. 735-751.

<sup>56</sup> CDC, The ICF: an Overview, available

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/icd/ICFoverview\\_FINALforWHO10Sept.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/icd/ICFoverview_FINALforWHO10Sept.pdf) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Palmer & Harley, 2012, p. 358.

<sup>58</sup> Palmer & Harley, p. 358.

*such as special education, vocational training and social welfare*".<sup>59</sup> In other words, according to this individual or medical model of disability the problems or limitations in functioning and participation in society are seen mainly as a consequence of a certain medical condition or the impairment of that person. The 'solution' hereby is to restore the individual's impairments in order to bring him or her back to the highest level of 'normality' he or she can obtain.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to this model, there is the social model of disability.<sup>61,62</sup> Here the focus of disability is not on the individual person but on the role of the society, i.e. disability comes from the failure of society to "*provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation*".<sup>63</sup> It is not the individual who is the 'problem', it's the society. Hence, disability and all of its negative consequences like discrimination and exclusion should be seen and 'treated' as "*a social state*"<sup>64</sup> and not as a medical condition. It is important in this social model context to make a distinction between a medical condition or an *impairment* and a *disability*, for they are two very different things.<sup>65</sup>

With the development of this idea of the social model of disability came renewed social policies which a focus on anti-discrimination, equality and inclusion of people with disabilities.<sup>66</sup> An important example is the CRPD which is based on the social model of disability.

### **2.2.1.1 Disability in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The preamble and Articles within the CRPD are based upon the social model of disability.

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<sup>59</sup> Idem, p. 358.

<sup>60</sup> Oliver, 1990, p.1-6.

<sup>61</sup> Burchardt, 2004, pp. 735-751.

<sup>62</sup> Shakespeare & Watson, 1997, pp. 293-300.

<sup>63</sup> Oliver, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Oliver, 1996, pp. 29-54.

<sup>66</sup> Barnes, 2000, p. 443.

Article e of the preamble states the following:

*“Recognising 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...”<sup>67</sup>*

The term ‘disability’ is defined by an open description here, because the negotiators of this Convention could not decide on how disability could and should be defined.<sup>68</sup> According to an interpretation guide of the CRPD published by HI<sup>69</sup>, the definition used in the CRPD is actually a “*non-definition*”<sup>70</sup> of disability.

The second part of Article 1 of the CRPD gives the following definition, which was decided upon after consulting various texts<sup>71</sup> and definitions by international organisations such as the World Health Organisation:

*“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”<sup>72</sup>*

It is important to interpret this Article 1 in the light of Article e of the preamble of the CRPD.

### **2.2.1.2 Disability Models in Education**

If these two models are applied to education systems, they reflect in a way the different school systems for children with disabilities. The individual model of disability can be seen in the traditional teaching system, in which children are being diagnosed with a specific impairment and therefore placed in a certain type of (segregated) educational

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<sup>67</sup> CRPD, 2006, Preamble, Article e.

<sup>68</sup> Schulze, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Idem.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> General Comment 5 of the CESCR Committee as well as the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>72</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 1.

institution.<sup>73,74</sup> The child and its learning difficulties are seen as ‘deviant’ and the child is therefore placed in a special school; it then has to adjust to the services this school has to offer.

When looking at education from the point of view of the social model of disability, it is the school which should be adjusting to the individual learning need of each child (with or without a disability). There is no such thing as children with ‘special needs’, as every child has its own ‘special’ individual needs and the concept of special needs education is therefore founded not on the social, but on the medical model.<sup>75</sup> Oliver, a clear proponent of the social model of disability, even is predicting an eradication of special needs education.<sup>76</sup> Instead of segregated education, the social model supports the principle of ‘inclusion’ in education as mentioned in the CRPD, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

### 2.2.2 Inclusion

Similar to disability, the concept of ‘inclusion’ has many different interpretations and meanings for various people.<sup>77</sup> This is an important factor in the study of policies and reports which contain the term ‘inclusion’: one always has to try to trace in a critical manner the true meaning of ‘inclusion’ used in each policy.

In their book about inclusive schools, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson have developed six ways of interpretation in the discourse of inclusive education:

*“1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as ‘having special educational needs.’*

*2. Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.*

*3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.*

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<sup>73</sup> Tomlinson, 1992, pp. 297-298.

<sup>74</sup> Reindal, 2008, p. 139.

<sup>75</sup> Norwich, 2002, p. 491.

<sup>76</sup> Oliver, 2000, p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> Ainscow & Booth, 1998.

4. *Inclusion as developing the school for all.*

5. *Inclusion as 'Education for All'.*

6. *Inclusion as principled approach to education in society*"<sup>78</sup>

Elaborating on the first way of thinking about inclusion, there is often a general thought of inclusion being mainly focused on children with disabilities – or rather those having ‘special educational needs’.<sup>79</sup> As already mentioned under the concept of ‘disability’, every child - also the ones without disabilities – has however its own ‘special’ individual need and so inclusion is much more than what is described here. In the Index of Inclusion, a tool to “*support the inclusive development of schools*”<sup>80</sup>, the authors move away from the term ‘special needs’ and rather call it “*barriers to learning and participation*”.<sup>81</sup> This is a huge improvement from the term ‘special needs’, as now it is more open to address the needs of every child that goes to school.

Interesting and quite close to what inclusion means according to the CRPD<sup>82</sup> is described by the fourth way of thinking about inclusion: “*inclusion as developing the school for all*”.<sup>83</sup> Booth and Ainscow meant by this a school in which diversity is embraced and in which there is a strong communication between schools and communities to sustain this.<sup>84</sup>

How did the concept of ‘inclusion’ develop itself? In the early nineties, the term ‘inclusion’ was used to replace terms like ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’ in English speaking countries.<sup>85</sup> In 1991, Ainscow wrote a book ‘Effective schools for All’<sup>86</sup> which contained the concept of ‘inclusion’ and in 1993 it was used in the educational program

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<sup>78</sup> Ainscow et al., 2006, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup> Ainscow et al., 2006, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> Ainscow & Booth, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Idem, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Cfr. infra para. 4.1.1.

<sup>83</sup> Ainscow et al., 2006, pp. 20-21.

<sup>84</sup> Idem, p. 20.

<sup>85</sup> Winter & O’Raw, 2010, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup> Ainscow, 1991.



‘Special needs in the Classroom: teacher education resource pack’<sup>87</sup>, which was developed by UNESCO.

The UNESCO *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* of June 1994<sup>88</sup>, stated that “*those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs*”<sup>89</sup> and that “*regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system*”.<sup>90</sup> However, more than 20 years later, there still seems to be a lot of misunderstandings about what the term ‘inclusive education’ actually means.

Inclusion should be clearly distinguished from integration: where integration is merely placing all children together within one main-stream class room, inclusion is so much more than only that. In its ‘Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All’ of 2005, UNESCO has defined inclusion in education in a clear way, *i.e.* “**a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education**”.<sup>91</sup> The emphasis here is on the fact that inclusion is ‘a process’ or a “*never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity*”.<sup>92</sup>

In the current research, the term ‘inclusive education’ is interpreted as stated in the Salamanca Statement, and as later used in the CRPD. According to this Convention, inclusive schools are places where “*children with special educational needs should*

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<sup>87</sup> UNESCO, *Special Needs in the Classroom: Teacher Education Resource Pack*, 1993, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000966/096636eo.pdf> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>88</sup> UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, 7-10 June 1994, available at [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>89</sup> *Idem*, Article 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Cfr. supra* footnote 88, Article 2.

<sup>91</sup> ED-2004/WS/39 cld 17402, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> *Idem*, p. 15.

*receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education*<sup>93</sup> and governments are called upon to “*give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences of difficulties*”.<sup>94</sup>

It is clear that a country cannot establish inclusive education from one day to another; it takes tremendous political will, effort and institutional reforms to achieve this currently idealistic yet achievable practice of inclusiveness. For example teacher training needs to be reformed, current teachers need to be re-educated and school infrastructure has to be adequate for allowing easy access to all students. Schools themselves also have to be committed to the inclusion movement.<sup>95</sup>

This need for educational transformation and ‘process of inclusion’ is what makes Rwanda an interesting case. After the genocide, the country and its education needed rebuilding: teachers had been killed, school buildings were destroyed<sup>96</sup> and community feeling had evaporated.<sup>97</sup> Because of this sort of *tabula rasa* from which the country had to rebuild itself, opportunities for creating new inclusive policies, rebuilding schools in an inclusive way and retraining teachers on inclusiveness were thus certainly there. Have they however been used by the Rwandan government? This will be discussed further down in this thesis.

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<sup>93</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24.

<sup>94</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>95</sup> Cfr. *supra* footnote 91, p. 23.

<sup>96</sup> Tarneden, 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Kabeera & Sewpaul, 2008, p.324-336.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **RWANDA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM**

This short chapter will give an overview of the education system, as this is important contextual background information to fully understand the perspectives on inclusive education in Rwanda as elaborated on in this Master’s thesis.

The education system in Rwanda has four main levels: pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education.<sup>98</sup> Starting from primary school, it operates on a 6-3-3-4 system: six years of primary school, three years of lower secondary education, three years of higher secondary education and a four years University Bachelor’s degree.<sup>99</sup>

After finishing primary education, the government has installed national examinations which students have to pass in order to proceed to secondary school. There are national examinations after both lower and higher secondary school to determine eligibility for respectively higher secondary school and secondary graduation or starting higher education.<sup>100</sup> In higher secondary level, students have to choose between general secondary school and Technical Secondary School or Teacher Trainer Colleges to become a primary teacher.<sup>101</sup> Apart from this system, there is also Technical and Vocational Education and Training, which *“provides young people and the unemployed with the skills to gain productive employment and also provides those already in employment with an opportunity to upgrade their skills, including entrepreneurs and those wishing to work for themselves”*.<sup>102</sup>

Education is compulsory and free from age seven to age fifteen, which is known as the Nine Years Basic Education (9YBE). The 9YBE is defined as *“all children to be able to get education in nine years, this is made of up of six years of primary education and*

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<sup>98</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 17.

<sup>99</sup> US Embassy Rwanda, the Rwandan Education System, available at [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/rwandan\\_education\\_system.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/rwandan_education_system.html) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>100</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 17.

<sup>101</sup> Idem, p. 17.

<sup>102</sup> Idem, p. 17.

*three years of general cycle of secondary education without paying school fees*".<sup>103</sup> The programme has set forth an increase of net enrolment rates and completion rates, with on top of that gender parity in basic education enrolment.<sup>104</sup> Rwanda was awarded the first Commonwealth Education Good Practice Award 2012 for this programme. The main components of this policy and the impact of these components, as described by the Education For All (EFA) Review Report 2015 of Rwanda<sup>105</sup>, involve:

- 1) *"construction projects using the Rwandan community service tradition of 'Umuganda'<sup>106</sup>";*
- 2) *reducing travel time by building schools closer to communities;*
- 3) *increase of "teacher recruitment, training and deployment"<sup>107</sup> to lower the 'pupil-qualified teacher ratios'<sup>108</sup>;*
- 4) *"introduction of an interim 'double-shift system'<sup>109</sup> in primary schools"<sup>110</sup>;*
- 5) *teacher specialisation;*
- 6) *"reduction of the number of required subjects"<sup>111</sup> and thereby "generating more instructional time"<sup>112</sup>;*
- 7) *"school-based textbook procurement for nine years rather than six years of education"<sup>113</sup>;*
- 8) *"the introduction of English as the medium of instruction"<sup>114</sup>.*

The report<sup>115</sup> states that *"this major initiative was successful, due in large part, to the decentralised functions of local government at that time, which provided civil works experience, supervision, funding mechanisms and monitoring"*.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 36.

<sup>105</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, pp. 36-37.

<sup>106</sup> On the last Saturday of each month, there is a national day of community service including e.g. building of schools, roads, cleaning of public areas. This is called 'Umuganda'.

<sup>107</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 37.

<sup>108</sup> Idem, p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> In primary schools which cannot accommodate all the pupils at once, children go to school in shifts: one half goes to school in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.

<sup>110</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 37.

<sup>111</sup> Idem, p. 37.

<sup>112</sup> Idem, p. 37.

<sup>113</sup> Idem, p. 37.

<sup>114</sup> Idem, p. 37.

After the ‘success’<sup>117</sup> of 9YBE, the Rwandan government decided to expand this programme to a Twelve Year Basic Education Programme<sup>118</sup> (12YBE), i.e. expanding the basic education to the higher secondary level. This 12YBE was implemented in 2012 and to meet the targets of this programme, infrastructure is currently being adjusted, an increase of the need for teachers is being addressed and ways are sought to implement the requirements of using English language as a medium of instruction by partnering up with organisations such as UNICEF, USAID and Volunteers Overseas (VSO).<sup>119</sup>

In conclusion, education in Rwanda has made tremendous progress over the last decade, which was certainly necessary after the destructions of the education system during the genocide. Especially the 9YBE programme which implemented a fee-free primary education system, has benefited the education system enormously. However, this progress has to be carefully interpreted, as literature has shown that drop-outs and repetition rates remain high<sup>120</sup> and that there are quite some ‘hidden costs’<sup>121</sup> to this apparently free education system, which will be discussed in chapter five and six.<sup>122</sup>

As stated in the introduction, a progress in education in general does however not always necessarily benefit certain specific categories of learners, such as children with disabilities.<sup>123</sup> For this reason it is important to investigate if and how Rwanda has tried to include children with disabilities in its national laws and education policies, to make sure that it is fulfilling its obligation towards the right for children with disabilities to inclusive education. Therefore, the next chapter will describe the international and national legal and policy framework of Rwanda concerning inclusive education for children with disabilities.

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<sup>115</sup> *Idem*, p. 37.

<sup>116</sup> *Idem*, p. 37.

<sup>117</sup> Cfr. *supra* footnote 17, p. 38.

<sup>118</sup> Cfr. *supra* footnote 17, p. 37.

<sup>119</sup> Cfr. *supra* footnote 17, p. 38.

<sup>120</sup> Abott et al., 2011, pp. 117-125.

<sup>121</sup> Williams et al., 2014, pp. 1-22.

<sup>122</sup> Cfr. *infra* para. 5.3.2.2 and 6.2.1.2.

<sup>123</sup> Ron-Balsera, 2011, pp. 274-284.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

# **THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: RWANDA’S LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Rwanda has obligations under the right to education for children with disabilities through various international, regional and national documents. It is important to set out the applicable legal framework in order to know the responsibilities of Rwanda towards the education for children with disabilities and to shine light on the gaps between this legal framework and its practical implementation. This chapter will first discuss international and regional treaties applicable to the case of Rwanda, followed by a description of relevant national laws and policies.

### **4.1 International and Regional Framework**

The right to education is enshrined in many international and regional documents and treaties which Rwanda has committed to. Already in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>124</sup> (UDHR) of 1948, which states in its preamble that the enshrined rights are a “*common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations*”<sup>125</sup>, the right to education is embedded in Article 26. Later that century in 1966, the right to education was enshrined in an internationally legally binding treaty, i.e. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>126</sup> (ICESCR). Also the Convention of the Rights of the Child<sup>127</sup> (CRC) of 1989 has Articles 28 and 29 which specifically describe the right to education for children. Although the Articles 28 and 29 do not specifically mention children with disabilities, the CRC Committee made the following observations in the context of education: “*discrimination against children*

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<sup>124</sup> UN, UDHR, General Assembly Resolution 217(A) (III), 10 December 1948.

<sup>125</sup> *Idem*, preamble.

<sup>126</sup> UN, ICESCR, General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI), 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976. Ratification date Rwanda: 16 April 1975.

<sup>127</sup> UN, CRC, General Assembly Resolution 44/25, 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990. Ratification date Rwanda: 24 January 1991.

*with disabilities is also pervasive in many formal educational systems and in a great many informal educational settings, including in the home”.*<sup>128</sup>

The international treaty which is however the most specific on the right to education for children with disabilities was adopted in 2006, i.e. the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>129</sup> (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>130</sup> (OP-CRPD). This treaty will be discussed later on.<sup>131</sup>

Rwanda has also made a commitment towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), a global partnership to end extreme poverty for 2000-2015<sup>132</sup>; the second MDG is to '*Achieve universal primary education*'.<sup>133</sup> Rwanda has proven how implementing these MDGs into national policies can set forth large improvements for a country's population: in 2013, it was stated that "*Rwanda among a handful of countries, stands out as being on track to achieve almost all the Goals by 2015*".<sup>134</sup> The country "*has made achieving the MDGs central to its policy framework, as defined in the long term development agenda, the Vision 2020*<sup>135</sup>, *as well as the medium term strategies, EDPRS1*<sup>136</sup> *and EDPRS2*<sup>137</sup>".<sup>138</sup> With regards to the second MDG Rwanda has shown remarkable progress, as mentioned in the introduction as well as chapter three of this thesis.<sup>139</sup> Yet these data should be carefully interpreted as in the article 'Rwanda's Potential to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals for Education' it was shown

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<sup>128</sup> CRC/GC/2001/1, 17 April 2001, para. 10.

<sup>129</sup> UN, CRPD, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106, 13 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008. Rwanda ratification date: 15 December 2008.

<sup>130</sup> UN, OP-CRPD, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106, 13 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008. Rwanda ratification date: 15 December 2008. The Optional Protocol contains the individual complaints procedure and the inquiries procedure.

<sup>131</sup> Cfr. *infra* para. 4.1.1.

<sup>132</sup> UN, Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution A/55/L.2, 8 September 2000.

<sup>133</sup> MDG 2, cfr. UNDP, Millennium Development Goals, available at [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/mdg\\_goals.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/mdg_goals.html) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>134</sup> UNDP, Millennium Development Goals Rwanda Final Progress Report: 2013, December 2013, p. 1 available at <http://www.rw.undp.org/content/rwanda/en/home/mdgoverview/millennium-development-goals-rwanda-2015-/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>135</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2000.

<sup>136</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2007.

<sup>137</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Cfr. *supra* footnote 134, preface ix.

<sup>139</sup> See 1.1, chapter 3 and 6.1.

that in 2012 there was an attendance rate of only 88%.<sup>140</sup> The article stated that progress has been made but that Rwanda is unlikely to reach 100 % net primary school attendance. Questions are being raised in that same article about the quality of education. Moreover, people with disabilities are not mentioned in any of the MDGs and thus also not in regarding to education; however there have been various reports by the UN Secretary General and resolutions by the UN General Assembly which emphasise the mainstreaming of people with disabilities into the MDGs.<sup>141</sup>

With the approaching of the deadline for the MDGs, it was decided on the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)<sup>142</sup> to negotiate “*a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide the path of sustainable development in the world after 2015*”.<sup>143</sup> These SDGs are “*relevant and apply in general terms to all countries including developed countries*”<sup>144</sup> and will be adopted as part of the Post-2015 Development Programme in September 2015. In regards to education, the fourth proposed SDG is the goal to “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all*”.<sup>145</sup> This is a more specific goal than any of the MDGs in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities, as it actually contains the word ‘inclusive’.

Similar to the MDGs, the International Community including Rwanda in 2000 agreed on six EFA goals to be achieved by 2015; these goals were set up with the aim “*to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults*”<sup>146</sup>, and thus also children with disabilities. These goals present important targets like accessibility of education, eliminating gender disparities and improving quality. However, the EFA goals might have ‘missed their chance’ regarding inclusive education for children with disabilities,

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<sup>140</sup> Abott et al., 2011, p. 118.

<sup>141</sup> Secretary General Reports: A/65/173;A/64/180;A/63/183;A/62/157 and UN General Assembly Resolutions: A/RES/65/186; A/RES/64/131; A/RES/63/150; A/RES/62/127; A/RES/60/131; A/RES/58/132.

<sup>142</sup> UN, Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/236, 20-22 June 2012 (at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

<sup>143</sup> Osborn et al., 2015, p. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Idem, p. 3.

<sup>145</sup> Idem, p .6.

<sup>146</sup> UNESCO, Education for All Goals, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).



for there is no specific mentioning of ensuring inclusive education for children with disabilities as such. Only the second EFA goal which ensures free compulsory and quality primary education for all children mentions “*children in difficult circumstances*”<sup>147</sup> and could be interpreted to include children with disabilities; however disability is nowhere listed as such as a group at risk for disparity in education.

On the regional level in Africa, disability rights are gradually being included in several treaties and documents.<sup>148</sup> Various treaties protect the right to education for people with disabilities, *inter alia* the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights<sup>149</sup> (1981) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child<sup>150</sup> (1990) mention the right to education for respectively every person and child. The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child mentions specifically that children with disabilities have the right to “*training, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration, individual development and his cultural and moral development*”.<sup>151</sup>

In conclusion, the most specific, legally binding and all-encompassing provision regarding inclusive education for children with disabilities can still be found on the international level in the CRPD; therefore this dissertation is discussing inclusive education as interpreted by the CRPD. The CRPD will be now further elaborated on in the light of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Rwanda.

#### 4.1.1 Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

Rwanda ratified the CRPD and accepted the Individual Communications Procedure and Inquiry Procedure of the OP-CRPD on 15 December 2008. Although five years

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<sup>147</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>148</sup> Combrinck, 2013, pp. 361-368.

<sup>149</sup> African Union, OAU Doc CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 3, 26 June 1981, entered into force 21 October 1986. Ratification date Rwanda: 15 July 1986.

<sup>150</sup> African Union, OUA Doc CAB/LEG/24.9/49, 1990, entered into force 29 November 1991. Ratification date Rwanda: 11 May 2001.

<sup>151</sup> African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990, Article 13.

overdue, the country submitted its Initial State Report to the CRPD in accordance to Article 35 of the CRPD in March 2015.<sup>152</sup>

Article 7 of the CRPD covers the general protection of children with disabilities' human rights. The right to education as such for children with disabilities is covered mainly by Article 24 of the CRPD. Article 24 should however be always interpreted in relation to Article 19 on independent living and inclusion into community, as this is a precondition for inclusive education and vice versa.<sup>153</sup> In short, Article 19 provides for inclusion and participation in the community; persons with disabilities should be able to choose where they live and with whom, they should have access to support services including personal assistance and community services and public facilities should be available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities.<sup>154</sup> Rwanda has put laws in place to protect this right to independent living<sup>155</sup> and is working together with international associations and disability organisations to ensure this right.<sup>156</sup>

Article 7 and Article 24 of the CRPD will now be discussed by use of HI's manual on 'Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities'<sup>157</sup>, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) 'Thematic Study on the Right of Persons with Disabilities to Education'<sup>158</sup> (hereafter referred to as 'the OHCHR Thematic Study'), as well as the 'Initial Report of Rwanda on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'<sup>159</sup> by Rwanda (hereafter referred to as 'the Initial State Report').

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<sup>152</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015.

<sup>153</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 6.

<sup>154</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 19.

<sup>155</sup> Rwandan law no. 01/2007 of 20 January 2007 Relating to Protection of Disabled Persons in General, Article 4-5.

<sup>156</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 29.

<sup>157</sup> Schulze, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015.

#### 4.1.1.1 Article 7: Children with Disabilities

Article 7 is a general provision directed towards children with disabilities. It states the following:

*“1. State Parties shall take all the necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.*

*2. In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”<sup>160</sup>*

This general provision states that all human rights, which include the right to education, should be ensured for all children with disabilities. This provision directed specifically to children with disabilities, acknowledges the fact that there are some issues which are merely child-related and not sufficiently protected by provisions focused on people with disabilities in general.<sup>161</sup> In summary, in relation to education this provision can be interpreted as that every child with disability should be able to enjoy their human right to education as any other child.

The Initial State Report does not discuss this Article separately. However, as a general provision the Initial State Report does describe several priorities of Rwanda in the implementation of the CRPD, which includes increasing “*access to quality education*”.<sup>162</sup> The human right to education for children with disabilities is therefore seen by Rwanda as one of the most important or rather urgent rights which Rwanda should ensure the full enjoyment of for its citizens.

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<sup>160</sup> CRPD, 2009, Article 7.

<sup>161</sup> Schulze, 2010, p. 69.

<sup>162</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 17.

#### 4.1.1.2 Article 24: Education

The right to inclusive education noted down in Article 24 of the CRPD is not a new right, but rather “*clarifies the specific implications for persons with disabilities of enjoying the right to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities*”.<sup>163</sup> The different paragraphs of this Article will now be discussed separately. It must be noted that the different provisions of this Article should be looked at “*in their entirety and not separately*”.<sup>164</sup>

Paragraph 1 of Article 24 CRPD states:

*“1. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:*

- a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;*
- b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;*
- c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society”.*<sup>165</sup>

As stated in the OHCHR Thematic Study, the goals stated in these paragraphs are not disability-specific but more a repetition or ‘echoing’ of “*the general objectives as proclaimed in the ICESCR and reflected in the CRC*”.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, this provision is not only applicable to children but to adults as well: learning is a lifelong process. This is highly relevant in the case of Rwanda, as a lot of people with disabilities did and still do

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<sup>163</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 7.

<sup>164</sup> *Idem*, p. 7.

<sup>165</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24(1).

<sup>166</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 8.

not have the opportunity to go to school because of the genocide, their disabilities, or other reasons.<sup>167</sup> Also, this provision tries to bring the ‘abilities’ of the children to light, instead of merely focussing on the issue of ‘disability’: it also shines light on talents, creativity and mental and physical *abilities* because it follows the social model of disability.

Maybe most importantly, this paragraph uses – and this for the first time in an international treaty<sup>168</sup> – the concept of an ‘inclusive education system’. The Salamanca Declaration (1994)<sup>169</sup> describes what inclusive education means, as already mentioned in the concepts above.<sup>170</sup> In short, inclusive education ensures that children with disabilities have access to regular schools where they receive qualitative education which meets their individual needs. The Salamanca Declaration<sup>171</sup> emphasises that “*inclusion is the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes and achieving education for all*”.<sup>172</sup>

The Initial State Report mentions that special education and inclusive education are “*an integral part of the approved Education Sector Plan (2013-2017)*”.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, it states that there is a partnership between the State and non-state actors like UNICEF and HI to achieve this goal of inclusive education and that they have developed projects together, like the ‘Inclusive Futures of Rwanda’ project, which the schools visited for this thesis were part of.<sup>174</sup>

Paragraph 2 of Article 24 CRPD states the following:

“2. *In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure that:*

- a) *Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded*

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<sup>167</sup> Cfr. infra para. 6.2.

<sup>168</sup> The provision of other international treaty which resembles this Article the most is Article 28 of CRC. However, in Article 28 of the CRC, the word ‘inclusive’ is not used for education. Source: Cfr. footnote 68, p. 133.

<sup>169</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 88.

<sup>170</sup> Cfr. supra para. 2.2.2.

<sup>171</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 88.

<sup>172</sup> Schulze, 2010, p. 133.

<sup>173</sup> This is the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2013/14-2017/18), cfr. supra para. 4.2.2.5.

<sup>174</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, pp. 37-38.

*from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;*

- b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;*
- c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;*
- d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;*
- e) Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.”<sup>175</sup>*

In this paragraph, principles of the right to education and inclusive education are specified. In provision 2(a), a distinction is made between free primary education and secondary education. This is because, like in the case of Rwanda, many countries do not have fully free and compulsory secondary education in general. Also, this provision underlines that learners “*should not be rejected by mainstream schools on the basis of any impairment*”.<sup>176</sup>

Provision 2(e) mentions the accessibility of education. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Right mentioned in their General Comment on the Right to Education<sup>177</sup> that accessibility consists of education being available in a non-discriminatory, physical as well as economical way. Accessibility is therefore much more than only the possibility to have physical access to schools, like reinforced by the more general Article 9 of the CRPD on accessibility in which States are “*required to take appropriate measures to ensure access to persons with disabilities*”.<sup>178</sup> Education should also be affordable and any form of discrimination which impedes the child or person to go to school is a form of inaccessibility of education. The definition of ‘reasonable accommodation’ as explained in Article 2 of the CRPD “*means necessary*

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<sup>175</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24 (1).

<sup>176</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>177</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, para. 6 (b).

<sup>178</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 8.

*and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms*".<sup>179</sup> The difference between 'reasonable accommodation' and 'accessibility' is that 'accessibility' may be ensured according to the principle of 'progressive realisation', where 'reasonable accommodation' should be immediately ensured.<sup>180</sup> The matter of 'reasonable accommodation' is repeated in provision 5 of the Article 24 CRPD. The principle of progressive realisation of accessibility is an important notion in a developing country like Rwanda, which often deals with lack of funding and means to realise this accessibility.

The Initial State Report mentions on this matter of accessibility that 241 ramps have been built in 64 schools; and access thus has mostly been considered in terms of physical access.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, the Initial State Report underlines that "*generally all public schools have inadequate infrastructure and are inadequately resourced*".<sup>182</sup>

The third paragraph of Article 24 CRPD underlines inclusion into the community by the development of social and language skills, with specifically mentioning deaf and blind children and teaching Braille and sign language:

*"3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:*

- a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;*
- b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;*

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<sup>179</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24 (2).

<sup>180</sup> Schulze, 2010, p. 55.

<sup>181</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 35.

<sup>182</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 35.

- c) *Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.*<sup>183</sup>

This provision is very relevant to Rwanda as it became clear from the opinions of stakeholders in chapter five, that many Rwandans do not believe people with visual impairments can be taught in a regular school and are therefore to be segregated.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, teachers are lacking skills such as sign language and braille.<sup>185</sup> The Initial State Report mentions that the government works together with non-state actors<sup>186</sup> which run special schools catering exclusively for children with disabilities; some schools are accommodated for one type of impairment like e.g. the visually or hearing impaired. It also mentions that Rwanda National Union of the Deaf “*has produced a dictionary of Rwandan Sign language and are the only permanent resource point in the country able to provide sign language training for teachers, educators, parents and students*”.<sup>187</sup>

The fourth paragraph of Article 24 of the CRPD states:

*“4. In order to help ensure the realisation of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.”*

This provision outlines the responsibilities of the State concerning qualitative teacher training and teacher employment with a specification of what this teacher training should include.

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<sup>183</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24 (3).

<sup>184</sup> Cfr. *infra* para. 6.2.2.1.B.

<sup>185</sup> Cfr. *infra* para. 6.2.2.3.

<sup>186</sup> Such as UNICEF, HI, Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

<sup>187</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 36.



Concerning teacher training, according to the Initial State Report all trainees graduating from teacher training colleges take one module in Special Needs and Inclusive Education.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, non-state partners like UNICEF and HI provide training of teachers. The Initial State Report mentions as well the School of Inclusive and Special Education at the University of Rwanda's College of Education. Also according to the Initial State Report, the Rwandan Education Board started in November 2013 with revising and developing a curriculum for all levels which takes into account the needs of different pupil groups including those with disabilities.<sup>189</sup> However, teacher training and employment remains a problematic issue in Rwanda, as will be discussed later in this thesis.<sup>190</sup>

Finally, the last paragraph of Article 24 states the following about tertiary and lifelong learning as well as reasonable accommodation, as already mentioned above:

*“5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.”<sup>191</sup>*

In overall, Article 24 CRPD gives a comprehensive and clear overview of the responsibilities of the State towards the human right to education for children with disabilities. As Rwanda has ratified the CRPD, it is ought to implement the provisions of Article 24 into its national legislation and policies as well as into practice. However, the Initial State Report states that *“there remains a gap between policy commitments and the practice of inclusion in the Rwandan Education sector and government recognises that much remains to be done, not only to improve enrolment of students with disabilities into education but in providing learning, and progression to a similar standard as other students”*.<sup>192</sup> How are children with disabilities and their right to

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<sup>188</sup> This is however only very recent measure; cfr. infra para. 5.3.3.1.B.

<sup>189</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p.37.

<sup>190</sup> Cfr. infra paras. 6.2.2.1.A and 6.2.2.3.

<sup>191</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24(5).

<sup>192</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 35.

education protected by national laws and policies in Rwanda? The next paragraph will describe the relevant national legislation and policies regarding this question.

## **4.2 National Legal and Policy Framework**

In this paragraph, the efforts by the government for providing protection for children with disabilities and their education through various national legal and policy documents will now be discussed.

### **4.2.1. National Constitutional and Legal Framework**

The legal framework on the protection and promotion of the (human) rights of persons with disabilities in Rwanda will first be described. This legal framework consists of the constitutional framework and specific legal protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

#### **4.2.1.1 Constitutional Framework**

The rights of all Rwandans, and therefore also the rights of persons with disabilities in Rwanda, are protected primarily by the constitution of Rwanda, adopted in 2003.<sup>193</sup> Article 11 of the constitution states that:

*“All Rwandans are born and remain free and equal in rights and duties. Discrimination of whatever kind based on, inter alia, ethnic origin, tribe, clan, colour, sex, region, social origin, religion or faith, opinion, economic status, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability, or any other form of discrimination is prohibited and punishable by law.”<sup>194</sup>*

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<sup>193</sup> Republic of Rwanda, Constitution, 26 May 2003 (amended 2010), entered into force 4 June 2003.

<sup>194</sup> Republic of Rwanda Constitution, 2003, Article 11.

This provision which protects against any form of discrimination gives a very comprehensive list of things which a person could be discriminated for; discrimination is indeed a sensitive issue due to the history of Rwanda.<sup>195</sup> People with a ‘physical or mental disability’ are explicitly mentioned among those who are not to be discriminated. In Article 14 of the constitution, persons with disabilities as a result from the genocide are specifically mentioned and protected.<sup>196</sup>

Article 40 of the constitution underlines the right to education, in which primary education should be free and compulsory. Remarkably, there is even a specific mentioning of education of people with disabilities in this provision:

*“... The State has the duty to take special measures to facilitate the education of disabled people...”<sup>197</sup>*

Which these ‘special measures’ are concretely is not clear from this provision. The wording in this law could have been more considerate by using ‘people with disabilities’ rather than ‘disabled<sup>198</sup> people’. This could be due to the fact that the constitution dates from 2003, before the adoption of the CRPD. However, it is quite remarkable that Rwanda has a constitutional provision which specifically mentions the right to education for people with disabilities: for example, this is nowhere to be found in the constitutions of neighbouring countries like Tanzania, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>199</sup> This could be due to the fact that the constitution of Rwanda is much younger than the constitutions of e.g. Uganda and Tanzania, but also the higher amount of people with disabilities due to the genocide and the corresponding increase of disability awareness in Rwanda<sup>200</sup> is one of the factors which could explain this.

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<sup>195</sup> Rwanda has e.g. a history of discrimination of Hutu’s by Tutsi’s and vice-versa.

<sup>196</sup> Article 14 of the constitution of Rwanda states that the State should “*take special measures for the promotion and welfare of the survivors of genocide who were rendered destitute by the genocide against the Tutsi committed in Rwanda from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1990 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1994, the persons with disabilities, the indigent, and the elderly, as well as other vulnerable groups.*”

<sup>197</sup> Republic of Rwanda Constitution, 2003, Article 40.

<sup>198</sup> Some persons with disability claim that they prefer ‘with disability’ because ‘dis-able’ would point out the fact that they are not *able*. Cfr. *infra* para. 5.3.4.

<sup>199</sup> Constitution of Tanzania (1977), Constitution of Uganda (1985) and Constitution of Democratic Republic of Congo (2005).

<sup>200</sup> Cfr. *infra* para. 5.2.1.

Finally, the constitution has a separate section on ‘International Treaties and Agreements’<sup>201</sup>, in which Article 190 of the Constitution says that international treaties and agreements “*shall be more binding than organic laws and ordinary law*”.<sup>202</sup> This includes the CRPD and its corresponding right to inclusive education, as Rwanda has ratified it.<sup>203</sup>

#### **4.2.1.2 Specific Legal Protection**

Rwanda has adopted several laws and ministerial orders to adequately protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Rwanda.<sup>204</sup> In this section, the relevant laws regarding education for children with disabilities will be discussed.

The Initial State Report to the CRPD of 2015 mentions:

*“... 2007 Rwanda promulgated law No. 01/2007 of 20 January 2007 relating to the protection of Persons with Disabilities in general. [...] law No. 54/2011 of 14 December 2011 relating to rights and protection of the child also provides specific protection to children with disabilities”.*<sup>205</sup>

Chapter two of the mentioned law no. 01/2007 of 20 January 2007 underlines specifically the ‘rights of a disabled person in matters related to education’. It consists of three Articles, Article 11 to Article 13, of which Article 11 states:

***“Article: 11***

*A disabled person has the right to appropriate education in respect of the nature of his or her disability. The Government or centres which cater for disabled persons who are not able to study with others, shall provide with them modalities to study in a specialised school and shall have qualified and trained teachers and appropriate equipment.*

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<sup>201</sup> Republic of Rwanda Constitution, 2003, paras. X(189-192).

<sup>202</sup> Republic of Rwanda Constitution, 2003, Article 190.

<sup>203</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>204</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, appendix 2.

<sup>205</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 4-5.

*The Minister in charge of Education shall, basing on basic categories of disability determined by the Minister in charge of Health, determine modalities of facilitating the needy disabled persons in ordinary schools and in specialised schools in case of failure to study with others”.*<sup>206</sup>

Here again the word ‘disabled’ is used instead of ‘with disabilities’. Although Article 11 starts off mentioning that ‘specialised schools’ should be provided, it ends with “*facilitating the needy disabled persons in ordinary schools*” which marks the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools. The word ‘inclusion’ or ‘inclusive education’ is however not used and the use of the concept of ‘categories of disability’ is implying the medical model of disability rather than the social model used by the CRPD. However, it is important to remark that this law dates from 2007 and thus from before Rwanda had signed and ratified the CRPD.

There are no chapters or articles specifically on children with disabilities in this law on the rights of disabled persons. Other articles are general provisions and specific chapters and articles on health, employment, culture, entertainment, sports, transport, communication, access to infrastructure and penalties are part of this law.

Finally, law no.54/2011 of 14 December 2011 on the rights of the child, contains Article 54 on ‘handicapped children’ which ensures that children with disabilities are entitled to ‘special protection’ from the government and enjoy all the rights as any other child. Moreover, it provides for the mandate of the Minister in charge of education to create “*programs and strategies to ensure special education meant for children with disability*”.<sup>207</sup> Although it is promising that the right to education for children with disabilities is specifically mentioned in a national law document, it only mentions ‘special education’ and not their right to attend main-stream education. Moreover, this law contains several ambiguous articles like Article 42 on ‘Child with a special disability’ which states that “*a child with a special physical or mental disability shall be*

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<sup>206</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 155, p. 11-13.

<sup>207</sup> Rwandan law no. 54/2011 of 14 December 2011 relating to the Rights of the Child, Article 54.

*placed in special institution for care and treatment*”.<sup>208</sup> No clarification of ‘special’ is given here.

In overall, people with disabilities are surely not neglected by nor excluded from the constitutional and legal framework in the State of Rwanda. However, some unfortunate wording and the lack of a visible social model context in these laws shows that there is a need of reforming these laws as well as establishing well-written and clear policies on inclusive education to adequately protect the rights of children with disabilities according to the social model used in the CRPD. The next paragraph will describe the current policies dealing with education for children with disabilities.

#### 4.2.2. National Policy Framework

Various policies which implement the right to primary education have been created and adopted by the Rwandan government, *inter alia*:

- Rwanda Vision 2020 (2000);
- Special Needs Education Policy (2007);
- 9YBE Policy (2008);
- Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) (2013-2018);
- Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2013/14-2017/18).

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, this list of policies and strategic plans concerning education is a non-exhaustive one. Nevertheless, the policies mentioned here are identified by this research as the most relevant to the subject of education for children with disabilities and will now be discussed in relation to the visibility of children with disabilities and the use of concepts and strategies regarding inclusive education.

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<sup>208</sup> Idem, Article 42.

#### 4.2.2.1 Rwanda Vision 2020<sup>209</sup>

Rwanda Vision 2020 (2000) is a plan set up by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning which “*aspires for Rwanda to become a modern, strong and united nation, proud of its fundamental values, politically stable and without discrimination amongst its citizens*”.<sup>210</sup> The Vision 2020 sees the lack of human capital as “*one of the major barriers to Rwandan achieving its goals of becoming a knowledge based and middle income country by 2020*”<sup>211</sup> and is investing strongly into education to overcome this barrier. The plan refers to the MDGs, but however does not state anything about education for children with disabilities. In fact, in the whole Vision 2020 there is no mentioning of people with disabilities as such. Ron-Balsera et al. stated that this focus on human capital in Rwanda has on the one side “*brought attention and resources to education*”<sup>212</sup> but on the other hand has also worsened the situation for some marginalised groups leading to inequalities and discrimination.<sup>213</sup> The nuance must be made that this plan was set up long before the adoption of the CRPD by Rwanda.

#### 4.2.2.2 Special Needs Education Policy<sup>214</sup>

In 2007, before Rwanda ratified the CRPD, the country put forward a Special Needs Education Policy. This policy clearly mentions children with disabilities under the category of those who have ‘special educational needs’. It should be noted - like already stated under the concepts of this thesis - that the term ‘special educational needs’ is actually not in line with the view of inclusive education according to the social model of disability.<sup>215</sup> A positive remark is that several parts of the policy mention children with disabilities “*on their own, not as part of special needs group*”.<sup>216</sup> In the policy, children

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<sup>209</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 135.

<sup>210</sup> Idem, p. 3.

<sup>211</sup> Paxton, 2012, p. 12.

<sup>212</sup> Ron-Balsera, 2011, p. 275.

<sup>213</sup> Idem, p. 275.

<sup>214</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007.

<sup>215</sup> Cfr. supra para. 2.2.1.2.

<sup>216</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 25.

with disabilities are defined as those with physical/motor, hearing, visual and intellectual impairments.<sup>217</sup> The Special Needs Education Policy mentions the influence from the MDGs as well as the EFA goals; it even mentions the Salamanca Statement and its Framework of Action on Inclusive Education (1994). However, no clear definition of inclusive education and few clear strategies on how to achieve inclusive education are described in the policy. Some concrete strategies to improve special needs education in Rwanda are reducing the distance to school and ensuring physical access, providing material support and training and employment of special needs teachers.<sup>218</sup> Although these strategies and this policy in general was a step forward in the realisation of inclusive education, the whole policy is due for an update according to the principles of the social model of disability as well as inclusion. It is indeed clearly visible from this policy's content that Rwanda had not signed the CRPD at the time of the adoption of this policy.

#### **4.2.2.3 Nine Years Basic Education Policy<sup>219</sup>**

In the document 'Fast track strategies for 9 Years Basic Education Implementation' from November 2008, children with disabilities are not mentioned, nor are special education needs or inclusive education. The document merely discusses reduction of courses, teacher specialisation and 'double shift'<sup>220</sup> reduction in order to implement the 9YBE strategy.

#### **4.2.2.4 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2<sup>221</sup>**

Next there is the second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), which "*contains the Rwandan government's high level approach to securing improved development and reduced poverty*"<sup>222</sup> and goes hand in hand with Vision

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<sup>217</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 214, p. 6.

<sup>218</sup> Idem, p. 14-17.

<sup>219</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 103.

<sup>220</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 109.

<sup>221</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 136.

<sup>222</sup> Paxton, 2012, p. 12.



2020. EDPRS 2 (2013-2018) is the successor of EDPRS 1 (2008-2012) and contains ‘Disability and Social Inclusion’ as one of its cross-cutting issues throughout the sector strategies and district plans over the period of EDPRS 2. Under the section ‘Productivity and Youth Employment’, it mentions under ‘Critical Skills and Attitudes for Service and Industrial Sectors’ that “*educational personnel and teachers with skills in inclusive and special needs education will be increased in number in order to promote social inclusion*”.<sup>223</sup> This is repeated in the description of ‘Disability and Social Inclusion’ as a cross-cutting issue.<sup>224</sup> In addition it is stated in the description that “*assistive devices and appropriate learning resources will be scaled up*” and “*key interventions will include accessible infrastructure*”.<sup>225</sup>

#### **4.2.2.5 Education Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2017/18<sup>226</sup>**

Finally, the Ministry of Education released its Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) for 2013/14 to 2017/18. Three overarching priorities are noted down in this plan: improved access, quality and relevance of education and training.<sup>227</sup> Under the first priority, which underlines the access to education for all children, it is stated that “*access to mainstream schools for children with special needs will be improved*”.<sup>228</sup> Under the third priority, with regards to education relevant to the labour market, students with ‘special educational needs’ are being emphasised.<sup>229</sup>

Under these three overarching priorities, the ESSP set forth ten sector outcomes for the next five years, with ‘disability’ as one of its cross-cutting issues. The first outcome concerns the access to education for all and mentions the aim of “*a more innovative approach to inclusive education*”.<sup>230</sup> The ESSP also states “*increased equitable access*

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<sup>223</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 136, p. 62.

<sup>224</sup> Idem, p. 88.

<sup>225</sup> Idem, p. 88.

<sup>226</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013.

<sup>227</sup> Idem, p. 38.

<sup>228</sup> Idem, p. 38.

<sup>229</sup> Idem, p. 39.

<sup>230</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 38.

*to education for students with special educational needs within mainstream and special schools*” to be one of the sector outcomes. Under this outcome, children with disabilities are specifically mentioned and it is suggested that “*education for children with disabilities also demands a strong coordination between different Ministries [like e.g. Ministry of Health] and agencies beyond the education sector*”.<sup>231</sup> Again, this policy uses the term ‘with special educational needs’ for children with disabilities, while in the social model every child has its own ‘special’ needs.

As for the strategies which are mentioned to achieve this outcome of access to education for children ‘with special education needs’, the ESSP mentions a ‘raise in budget’, ‘disabled-friendly school construction programmes with wheelchair access and a barrier free terrain’, ‘providing specific learning materials and teaching aids’ and the ‘increase of trained teachers to provide specific support’.<sup>232</sup> As an overall strategy, “*the education sector aims to be fully inclusive, implementing strategies to ensure that schools are adequately resourced and prepared to integrate children with special needs*”.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, the ESSP also mentions projects like ‘Innovation for Education’, which the projects<sup>234</sup> visited for this Master’s thesis are part of.<sup>235</sup> In overall, the ESSP has clear attention for children with disabilities and inclusive education; however these terms are not clearly defined as for example no clear explanation of what inclusive education actually means is given in the ESSP.

In summary, there has been an evolution in the different policies and strategic plans concerning the ‘visibility’ of children with disabilities in these policies and plans. The same goes for the term of inclusive education, which was only found in the more recent policies. However, there is a need for more clear language on different concepts of inclusive education; for example the term ‘inclusive education’ as such is used rather arbitrarily. This issue was already raised by Lewis et al. in 2009, who stated in his paper that “*while both Rwanda’s and Ethiopia’s key education documents mention education*

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<sup>231</sup> Idem, p. 41.

<sup>232</sup> Idem, pp. 53-54.

<sup>233</sup> Idem, p. 53.

<sup>234</sup> Cfr. appendix 3.

<sup>235</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 52.

*approaches for marginalised groups, they do not consistently explain the key concepts they are using”.*<sup>236</sup>

How does the national legal framework interact or follows the international framework on inclusive education, or with other words: how is the international legal framework influencing the national laws and policies of Rwanda? This question will be shortly answered in the next paragraph.

### **4.3 Interactions between the International and National Legal Framework**

Rwanda has made visible efforts to implement the commitments made in the international treaties into national laws and policies. Disability rights are included in national laws and the right to education for children is even included in the constitution. Policies are improving and are putting education for children with disabilities as their key priorities. The national legal framework set up by the government of Rwanda confirms in a way the opinion of different key stakeholders that there is a strong political will for improving inclusive education in Rwanda.<sup>237</sup>

However, some concerns could be raised regarding the implementation of international standards into the national legal framework. First of all, although there is a clear influence of international standards into the different national policies, this is not always perceived in a positive way. Lewis et al. in 2009 e.g. stated that *“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”*.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, Lewis stated that policies are often missing cultural context and that Rwanda should include more *“positive, inclusive elements of their own country’s culture”* in their policies.<sup>239</sup> This ‘imposing’ of international standards into policies without taking into account the cultural context of a

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<sup>236</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>237</sup> Cfr. infra chapter 5.3.4.

<sup>238</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 24.

<sup>239</sup> Idem, p. 24.

country, makes inclusive education almost entirely a ‘non-indigenous’ concept.<sup>240</sup> This could be an explanation for why policies are using - almost arbitrarily it seems - the term ‘inclusive education’ without seeming to know what it really entails and without explaining ways to use the cultural advantages of Rwanda to achieve this inclusive education. Moreover, although children with disabilities are definitely included in the most recent education policies, there is a lack of clear, well-structured and comprehensive strategies to implement these policies into reality of every day school life in Rwanda.

In summary, Rwanda is well on track with implementing the international framework into national legislation and policies; however there is a need for clearer conceptual language, contextual influences and well worked-out strategies regarding the realisation of inclusive education. Nevertheless, it must be noted that these challenges concerning the legal framework are following a world-wide trend and are not uniquely applicable to Rwanda<sup>241,242,243</sup>; European countries as well are struggling to implement the CRPD into their national disability laws and policies.<sup>244</sup> Moreover, political will is present in Rwanda, as confirmed in the next chapter by the opinions of parents, teachers and other key stakeholders regarding inclusive education.<sup>245</sup>

How did these national laws, policies and political will affect the everyday reality of education for children with disabilities in Rwanda? The next chapter gives an overview of the experiences of different key stakeholder regarding this everyday reality. In chapter six, these experiences will be then brought together with the legal framework described in the present chapter, in the form of achievements, challenges and recommendations on inclusive education in Rwanda.

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<sup>240</sup> *Idem*, p. 24.

<sup>241</sup> Chan, 2015, pp. 1-8.

<sup>242</sup> Brehmer-Rinderer et al., 2013, pp. 25-36.

<sup>243</sup> Lang et al., 2011, pp. 206-220.

<sup>244</sup> Brehmer-Rinderer et al., 2013, pp. 25-36.

<sup>245</sup> Cfr. *infra* chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **THE REALITY OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN RWANDA**

Firstly, the different projects which were visited will be shortly described; a more comprehensive description of each project can be found in the appendices.<sup>246</sup> Secondly, an overview of the literature on attitudes towards disability followed by personal observations will be given in this chapter. Thirdly, the observed opinions, views and experiences of relevant stakeholders will be extensively described and summarised.

#### **5.1 Visited Projects**

Lewis stated in 2009 that it is important to report on existing examples of inclusive education so that these isolated examples can turn “*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*”.<sup>247</sup> The current researcher visited three types of projects in Rwanda: the UCC in Rubavu, HVP in Gatagara and the ‘Inclusive Futures for Rwanda’ project by HI in the districts of Rubavu and Kamonyi.

Firstly, the UCC<sup>248</sup> is a privately funded centre in the heart of the city of Rubavu, founded by two local Rwandans and an American. It has two parts: a special centre and an inclusive school. The special centre provides education, skills classes and other services for children with disabilities as well as adults. The inclusive school has classes at pre-primary level and recently also opened classes at primary level. An amount of 45 children with disabilities is included in a school of 410 children. The strength of the centre are the skills of its teachers: there are teachers who are proficient in sign language and all of them have had training on inclusive education. Furthermore, the

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<sup>246</sup> Cfr. appendices 1,2 and 3.

<sup>247</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 41.

<sup>248</sup> Cfr. appendix 1.

UCC organises sensitisation activities within the community and other school communities to ‘spread’ the inclusive values which are part of their centre. In overall, UCC applies a holistic approach to inclusion of persons with disabilities by providing not only educational services, but health care and social inclusion services as well.<sup>249</sup>

The second centre the researcher visited was HVP<sup>250</sup> Gatagara. This was the first centre for children with disabilities in Rwanda and has a large medical centre as well as an educational centre. In the medical centre, mostly orthopaedic surgeries are performed on children as well as adults. Moreover, the treatment they provide in the medical centre is multi-disciplinary: there are *inter alia* a pharmacist, orthopaedic workshop and a physiotherapist available in the centre. The educational centre consists of a primary school and a vocational training school, mostly for children with disabilities. An amount of 266 students with disabilities go to school here, out of the total amount of 317 students. The centre has tried to make its infrastructure accessible for all learners. Some of the teachers have had training on teaching children with disabilities, but not all. However, HVP Gatagara is trying to provide for training opportunities for their teachers, so that the trained teachers can pass on their knowledge to other untrained teachers in the school.<sup>251</sup>

The last project which was visited, was the ‘Inclusive Futures in Rwanda’ by HI.<sup>252,253</sup> In 2013, the organisation has started a two-years inclusive schooling project in 24 different primary schools situated in the districts of Rubavu and Kamonyi; the researcher visited five of these schools. The project has *inter alia* provided for sensitising programmes within the school, teacher training and the organisation of parent groups. This project has increased the number of children with disabilities going to school from 380 to 1296 within these two districts.<sup>254,255</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> All the information from this paragraph on UCC comes from the meeting with UCC on 21 April 2015 and <http://umbuwecenter.org> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>250</sup> Cfr. appendix 2.

<sup>251</sup> All the information from this paragraph on HVP Gatagara comes from the visit at HVP Gatagara from 10 April 2015 to 16 April 2015 and [www.gatagara.org](http://www.gatagara.org) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>252</sup> Cfr. appendix 3.

<sup>253</sup> HI, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> *Idem*, p. 8.

The three different projects described above are promising and have made an effort to bring inclusive education into Rwanda. The UCC is an impressive example of an initiative set up by motivated local individuals who want to create something which will help the people in their country. Although the fact that not everyone can afford to go to this school because it is a private school, efforts are being made to include children with disabilities in their classrooms. It was interesting to visit HVP Gatagara, as it is the first institution that cared for children with disabilities in Rwanda. However, because of the specialised nature of the centre and the fact that there are so many children with disabilities in comparison to children without disabilities, this school is rather a special education school than an inclusive school. Most of the field research data used for this dissertation derives from the public school projects of HI. As these schools are public schools situated in the rural areas of Rwanda, one can say these reflect the situation of inclusive education in Rwanda the best.

Next to these projects, the researcher has also visited experts from various disability organisations in order to gather important contextual data on the general situation of children with disabilities as well as specifically for education. One of the most important contextual factors is the attitudes towards disability in Rwanda, which will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.

## **5.2 Attitudes towards Disability**

In this paragraph the literature on attitudes towards disability will be described, followed by a comparison with personal observations made during the field research trip.

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<sup>255</sup> All the information from this paragraph on HI comes from the meeting with Vincent Murenzi on 09 April 2015 and Inclusive Futures in Rwanda Summary Report 2015, HI, 2015.

### 5.2.1 Literature

Recent specific literature about attitudes towards disability in Rwanda seems rather scarce. Three relevant documents which can be found in research over the last decade, are firstly a 2005 Country Report from Disability Knowledge and Research by Thomas<sup>256</sup>, secondly the paper 'Education for disabled people in Ethiopia and Rwanda' authored by Lewis in 2009<sup>257</sup> and thirdly the Rwanda Disability Programme Overview document by VSO of 2012.<sup>258</sup> The most recent published document which contains description of attitudes towards disability dates from March 2015: the CRPD State Report 'Initial Report of Rwanda on the Implementation of the CRPD'.<sup>259</sup> Thomas stated in 2005 that people with disabilities are often among the poorest of Rwanda's population and that they "*experience poverty more intensely*"<sup>260</sup> than non-disabled poor people. The report further on stated that people with disabilities are "*both actively and passively excluded in Rwandan society*"<sup>261</sup> and that these people and their abilities are not valued. Children with disabilities "*are seen as a source of shame and often hidden away. Name-calling is common*".<sup>262</sup> Elaborating on the name-calling, Thomas stated that "*disabled people are commonly addressed by their type of disability rather than their real name*"<sup>263</sup>; this was confirmed by children, parents and teachers as mentioned in the next sub-chapter.<sup>264</sup> The document by Thomas goes on stating how people with disabilities have difficulties finding employment and they often are denied the right to inheritance, land or assets.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Thomas, 2005.

<sup>257</sup> Lewis, 2009.

<sup>258</sup> VSO, Disability Programme Overview, June 2012, available at [http://www.vsointernational.org/sites/vso\\_uk/files/documents/Country%20specific%20documents/2012/Africa/Rwanda/Rwanda-disability-overview-June-2012.pdf](http://www.vsointernational.org/sites/vso_uk/files/documents/Country%20specific%20documents/2012/Africa/Rwanda/Rwanda-disability-overview-June-2012.pdf) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>259</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015.

<sup>260</sup> Thomas, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>261</sup> Thomas, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>262</sup> Idem, p. 5.

<sup>263</sup> Idem, p. 21.

<sup>264</sup> Cfr. infra para. 5.3.

<sup>265</sup> Thomas, 2005, p. 5.



Secondly, in the paper<sup>266</sup> by Lewis from 2009 it is stated that the Rwandan genocide in 1994 brought forth an increase of persons with disabilities in the country.<sup>267</sup> This was not only directly due to the violence, but also to “*the breakdown of health, vaccination and rehabilitation services*”.<sup>268</sup> As can be read below<sup>269</sup>, the aftermath of the genocide was evident during the field research in Rwanda: there were a lot of people with disabilities visible in the streets. There is however also a ‘positive’ side to this increase of disability: “*disabled people seem more visible and government support to genocide survivors has raised the profile of disability within policy and legislation*”.<sup>270</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that those who have impairments resulting from the genocide are prioritised and there are many people with disabilities who “*still face routine discrimination*”.<sup>271</sup>

The findings of Thomas were largely confirmed by the VSO Rwanda Disability Programme overview of 2012.<sup>272</sup> This report stated that “*Rwandans do not value disabled people*”<sup>273</sup> and that “*people with disabilities are seen as objects of charity*”.<sup>274</sup> The report elaborates on the terminology in Kinyarwanda which used to exist for people with disabilities: ‘broken pots’, ‘things’ or ‘objects’.<sup>275</sup> Further on the report states that there *is* however awareness raising by civil society; there are various organisations to represent people with all sorts of impairments and the government is working in relation to these.<sup>276</sup> This was observed during the field research trip, as the author met with some of these organisations.<sup>277</sup>

Finally, the 2015 CRPD State Report<sup>278</sup> confirms all the above literature findings: “*Disability is still regarded by many members of society in Rwanda as a burden, a*

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<sup>266</sup> Lewis, 2009.

<sup>267</sup> Idem, p. 9.

<sup>268</sup> Idem, p. 9.

<sup>269</sup> Cfr. infra para. 5.2.2.

<sup>270</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 16.

<sup>271</sup> Idem, p. 16.

<sup>272</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 258.

<sup>273</sup> Idem, p. 1.

<sup>274</sup> Idem, p. 1.

<sup>275</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 258, p. 2.

<sup>276</sup> Idem, p. 2.

<sup>277</sup> Cfr. supra para. 2.1.4.

<sup>278</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015.

*misfortune, or even a curse. The impact upon household poverty where one member has a disability is verifiable and there remain social barriers and some belief in myths attributing disability to punishment or witchcraft. Some children, especially those with multiple disabilities or learning disabilities, may be concealed, and not brought for registration or medical consultations. Persons with disabilities may be subjected to physical violence or psychological abuse due to negative attitudes and ignorance”.*<sup>279</sup>

In line with what was mentioned in the 212 VSO document, the State Reports goes on describing all the sensitisation and awareness-raising campaigns by state actors, like the Ministry of Local Government, and non-state actors like disability organisations in Rwanda.<sup>280</sup>

In summary, the literature is quite conclusive about the fact that negative attitudes are still present but slowly changing by efforts of *inter alia* civil society movements and governmental will. This literature – which is somewhat out of date – could however best be complemented and interpreted in relation to recent observations made in the field, as noted down in the next paragraph.

### 5.2.2 Observations

In this subchapter, observations made by the author during the field research trip in Rwanda will be described and compared to the findings in the literature. The aftermath of the Rwandan genocide was indeed clearly visible in the streets of Rwanda<sup>281</sup>. There were many people with disabilities out in the public and it was not uncommon to see people with amputated<sup>282</sup> legs and arms.

Some ‘ordinary’ Rwandans – a taxi driver, youth hostel employee and an artist – all talked quite positive about the situation for people with disabilities in Rwanda. The hostel employee told about how it used to be a disgrace to have children with

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<sup>279</sup> Idem, p. 19.

<sup>280</sup> Idem, pp. 19-20.

<sup>281</sup> Places visited: the cities of Kigali, Butare, Gatagara, Nyanza, Rubavu and their surroundings, Kamonyi district, Rubavu district.

<sup>282</sup> During the genocide, many people got their hands and/or other limbs cut off by the Interahamwe rebel groups.

disabilities and you would only see them begging on the streets; currently however they are more seen as a blessing and they also get education in special schools. The taxi driver told about two people with disabilities who he knew personally: one of them is a student and another one is working. According to him, these people do have opportunities in Rwanda. The artist was running a project to help street children getting back into school. Three of the children in his project are known to have an impairment. The other children - the ones without disabilities – are nice for these children with disabilities, according to him. Only one child suffering from epilepsy sometimes scares the other children because they often still think it is a consequence of some kind of witchcraft, like described in the literature according to e.g. the CRPD statement<sup>283</sup> about attitudes towards disability.

The Director of HVP Gatagara school believed that the genocide of 1994 not only changed the visibility of disability in policies and legislation as suggested by the literature, but also changed in a way how the Rwandan people think about people with disabilities. Especially in the case of persons with psychological impairments, people now understand that it can be caused by a trauma instead of being inherent to the person, he said.

The above statements all point to a positive change in awareness towards disability, partly due to the advocacy and sensitisation of many disability organisations active in Rwanda. These organisations are all employing people with disabilities: for example the executive director of the RUB is a woman with complete visual impairment. The various disability organisations are quite well organised<sup>284</sup> and are given a role and a voice to play in the development of equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities.

According to these organisations there are however still a lot of problems around attitudes towards disability. An employee at RUB stated that children are often

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<sup>283</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.1.

<sup>284</sup> NUDOR is an umbrella organisation which is made up of 8 national organisations representing people with disabilities. It advocates for the rights of people with disabilities to government, ministries, civil society organisations and other. It brings the views of the different organisations together in order to work in partnership so to achieve common aims and defend common interests. Cfr. NUDOR, About NUDOR, available at <http://www.nudordisabilityrwanda.org/about-nudor.html> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

stigmatised because they are different. Furthermore she stated the following: *“Children with albinism are very often stigmatised because people will not feel afraid or uneasy or uncomfortable to tell them they look disgusting. [...] This also happens sometimes to blind children”*.<sup>285</sup> She continues with the fact that a lot of families and people of the community also still think that children with disabilities are the result of witchcraft. The parents feel embarrassed and they don't want people to know such child is in their house. Every now and then, the RUB discovers a child who has been living at home and whose existence was not known of. This is in line with what the literature<sup>286</sup> above said about children with disabilities often being hidden away.

Therefore, RUB has made awareness raising one of its key activities. The employee at RUB emphasises the role of the family involving the attitudes of the community towards children with disabilities: *“The way your family takes you can mean a lot in the way the rest of the community takes you. If they stand by you and they speak for you and they don't keep you in, then people get used to you. Stigmatisation reduces...”*<sup>287</sup> This is in line with what Evariste Karangwa stated in his ethnographic study in 2006<sup>288</sup> about how children who are accepted by their families are more likely to gain identity in the community.<sup>289</sup>

Vincent Murenzi at HI had similar statements.<sup>290</sup> He talked about negative attitudes before starting the inclusive education projects in Rwanda and how sensitising the community is one of the key activities of the projects<sup>291</sup> which HI is running. He made an interesting general distinction between children from wealthy and from poor families: *“...we noted negative attitudes from some parents. [...] Those [parents] from poor families are considering disability as a source for support<sup>292</sup> and those from rich*

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<sup>285</sup> Interview with RUB employee, Kigali, 08 April 2015.

<sup>286</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.1.

<sup>287</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 285.

<sup>288</sup> Karangwa, 2006.

<sup>289</sup> Idem, p. 125.

<sup>290</sup> Interview with Vincent Murenzi, project manager, HI, Kigali, 09 April 2015.

<sup>291</sup> Cfr. appendix 3.

<sup>292</sup> This means as a source of begging.

*families consider disability to be a curse, punishment, shame. They hide them*".<sup>293</sup> This was confirmed by Evariste Karangwa in his study on inclusion in Rwanda.<sup>294</sup>

Likewise, the Director of Economic and Social Empowerment Unit of NCPD explained that in old times, people with disabilities used to be killed and hidden, but now they are more seen in the street.<sup>295</sup> He said that the attitudes have not completely changed yet, but that Rwanda has come from very far. He told about how children with disabilities were used to be seen as 'useless', which implied that there would be no purpose of them for going to school. However, the director stated that the government is now trying to equalize all Rwandans and that children with disabilities cannot be refused by schools any longer.

CBM mentioned that these beliefs about disability as a punishment or a curses are gradually changing: "*For the moment, the attitudes are changing. Not only the parents, but also the community is gently changing its attitudes*".<sup>296</sup> The director of UCC<sup>297</sup> confirms this and adds that these attitudes are changing because of the government's introduction of laws and policies, which were elaborated upon in the previous chapter. This changing mind-set was mentioned as well by children, parents and teachers as will be described in the next sub-chapter.<sup>298</sup>

### 5.2.3 Conclusion on Attitudes towards Disability

Overall it can be said that the personal observations are in line with the literature which is available about attitudes towards disability in Rwanda. The general opinion is that negative attitudes like stigmatisation and shame are still there when it comes to people with disabilities. Some people still believe children with disabilities to be the consequence of witchcraft or a punishment from God. Other children and people call

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<sup>293</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 290.

<sup>294</sup> Karangwa, 2006, p. 126.

<sup>295</sup> Interview with the Director of Economic and Social Empowerment Unit, NCPD, Kigali, 10 April 2015.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with CBM employee, Kigali, 09 April 2015.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with UCC school director, Gatagara, 21 April 2015.

<sup>298</sup> Cfr. infra para. 5.3.1.

them by names that refer to their impairments instead of their real names. They are hidden inside the house, especially in the wealthier families. However, the attitudes are changing. International organisations as well as local civil society organisations in cooperation with the government are trying to achieve a change in attitude by awareness-raising. Moreover, people with disabilities are being given a voice and are being represented by different national organisations.

The attitudes towards disability in Rwanda are important for understanding the context in which the various projects in Rwanda are trying to develop an inclusive way of education. Positive attitudes towards disability are key in developing inclusive education, whereas negative attitudes still form an obstacle in the process of reaching for inclusive education in Rwanda. Nevertheless, many other factors are influencing the experiences and opinions of key stakeholders on inclusive education and will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.

### **5.3 Experiences and Opinions of Key Stakeholders**

In a background paper about ‘Education for Disabled people in Ethiopia and Rwanda’, prepared for the EFA global monitoring report 2010, it is stated that *“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”*.<sup>299</sup> It is therefore important to report about the experiences and opinions of children, teachers, parents, local organisations and others regarding inclusive education. First, the opinions of de children obtained through field research will be described and analysed. Thereafter the opinions of the parents, teachers, organisations and others will be described and analysed.

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<sup>299</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 40.

### 5.3.1 Children

There is a lack of literature about how children with disabilities experience every day school life in Rwanda. Therefore, in the following paragraphs the negative as well as positive opinions of children of various schools will be described and analysed. The author was able to speak to children in HVP Gatagara and HI's inclusive primary school projects in Bunyonga and Masogwe. A distinction must be made between HVP Gatagara, which is a specialised centre for children with disabilities (where children without disabilities also go) and the public inclusive school projects which claim to be mainstream inclusive schools.

#### **5.3.1.1 Home de la Vierge des Pauvres Gatagara<sup>300</sup>**

In HVP Gatagara, the author was able to talk to two children who were going to the school which is part of the centre. Although it was school holidays, these children were still at the centre because they were to receive medical treatment.

The first boy was 14 years old, he was in a wheelchair and still in primary school. The boy was quite shy; he was not very cheerful but also did not seem sad. He talked in Kinyarwanda while the physiotherapist translated this into English. The boy told that he liked school and that there were no problems. Other children were sometimes helping him with e.g. washing clothes. According to him he was able to participate in all the activities he wanted. When asking him what the school could do more to make learning easier for him, he explained how the teacher could – after explaining everything for the whole class – take more time to individually explain children who do not understand everything that well. This child preferred to be in class also with children without disabilities, not only because they could help him but because it shows that he can also study in class like normal children. His parents liked that he was going to school.

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<sup>300</sup> All the information in this paragraph was obtained during conversation with two children, translated by a physiotherapist on 14 April 2015 in HVP Gatagara.

Another boy of 13 years old gave his opinion; he was also still in primary school. He shared the same experiences as the other child and had no problems with going to school. He confirmed in a way the opinion of the other child that the teacher had to explain more, by saying that the teacher could call the parents to arrange someone to teach the students extra evening classes. He said that he could participate in every activity, except the fact that he needed to go to a 'special toilet'. Furthermore, he wished the school would enlarge the door of this toilet because now it is too small and he always needs help getting in. Also, in some areas of the centre the area is not easy for riding a wheelchair and the school could improve this. Finally, he liked that there are children without disabilities in his class, so they can help him. His parents approved of him going to school.

Also children without disabilities are experiencing the positive effect from students with and without disabilities being in class together. A physiotherapist told about her daughter who had no disabilities but who was also going to school in HVP Gatagara. There was an albino child in the class of her daughter and at first her daughter told her she did not want to study together with "*that albino*"<sup>301</sup> child. After one semester of being in class together, "*that albino*" became "*my friend*".<sup>302</sup>

In summary, these children with disabilities showed happy to be in a class together with students without disabilities because of two main reasons: support and self-confidence. The children with disabilities are getting support from the children without disabilities because the latter can help them. Secondly, they are gaining confidence by sitting in the same classroom as children without disabilities, because it makes them feel like they are like the other children and they are able to do what children without disabilities can do. The children gave the impression that they could not always follow class adequately as they both mentioned that the teacher could give extra individual explanations. The high number of students with disabilities<sup>303</sup> in comparison to children without disabilities could be an important factor concerning this issue. If classes are already quite large<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Interview with physiotherapist, HVP Gatagara, Gatagara, 14 April 2015.

<sup>302</sup> Idem.

<sup>303</sup> Cfr. appendix 2.

<sup>304</sup> About 30 children for one teacher.



and if the amount of children with disabilities is higher than the amount of children without disabilities it could be difficult to provide adequate support. Although the school has tried to make the school accessible for everyone<sup>305</sup>, one of the children was pointing out some improvements which could be made in terms of accessibility of the centre.

### **5.3.1.2 Public Schools (Inclusive Futures in Rwanda Project)<sup>306</sup>**

In the public schools of Bunyonga as well as Masogwe, children were willing to give statements on their experiences and opinions about their school. When arriving in both schools, the children were singing a song about inclusive education. Statements from children both with and without disabilities could be categorised in three subjects:

- a) Change in attitudes and general experiences;
- b) Activities and methods used to respond to all children's needs;
- c) Ideas for improvement.

These categories will now be elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

#### ***A) Change in Attitudes and General Experiences***

In Bunyonga, a girl told about how the other children used to beat her at school because she had an impairment, and how they would call her 'invaluable'. This mind-set was confirmed by some other children without disabilities. They explained: *"Before inclusive education came to our school, I thought a child with disabilities was not normal, not like me, and could not do anything. When they told me about inclusive education, I asked myself how to study together with them. One time, there was a child who could not see well, and I thought he was like an animal and not like other*

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<sup>305</sup> Cfr. para. 5.1.

<sup>306</sup> All the statements of children in this paragraph were obtained during conversations with children in Bunyonga primary school on 23 April 2015 and Masogwe primary school on 24 April 2015.

*children*".<sup>307</sup> This confirms the attitudes towards disability as described in the previous sub-chapter. He then continued to explain how the teachers then taught him and his peers that all children are the same and slowly they started to understand that all children should be learning together. In overall, he was grateful towards inclusive education.

In Masogwe, the children had similar stories and opinions. Like the children of Bunyonga, they confessed that they used to have no respect for children with disabilities. They would laugh at them and call them names. One child told as well about how he used to be beaten by the other children. Like mentioned in the sub-chapter<sup>308</sup> on attitudes, children without disabilities would call the children with disabilities by abusive names defined by their type of impairment.

The children without disabilities were very positive about inclusive education: "*With this system, we permit helping the children with a disability because they are children like us*".<sup>309</sup> Another child added: "*And also they are capable of doing something.*"<sup>310</sup> The children with disabilities were also content: "*I am really very happy because the children who have no problems like me, help me without a problem. They care of me like they care of others*".<sup>311</sup> Another child with disabilities confirmed this: "*I thought that I could not go to school, when I met the others who are like me, some gave me the advice to go to school. So I decided to come, but I was afraid they would laugh at me. But actually there is no problem and I play with them without problem*".<sup>312</sup> One child even spoke from a rights-based perspective and said: "*Children with disabilities have the same rights*".<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>308</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.2.

<sup>309</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>310</sup> Idem.

<sup>311</sup> Idem.

<sup>312</sup> Idem.

<sup>313</sup> Idem.

### ***B) Activities and Methods Used to Respond to All Children's Needs***

Firstly, the children talked about a change in teaching methods. In Bunyonga, the children told that teachers sensitised them about disability and that they had acquired more knowledge about different types of impairments and how to handle them. A girl with disabilities stated: “... *when we came here in the school, there were problems. Teachers did not teach us like the other children. But after inclusive education came, they treated us like the other children; without exclusion*”.<sup>314</sup> She reaffirmed this later on: “*The teachers taught us without knowing our capacities and our difficulties; now the teaching methods have changed and they teach us in a general way according to the capacity of every child*”.<sup>315</sup>

Secondly, the children talked about materials available for children with disabilities. One girl said that there are didactic materials available for children with visual impairments and children who have problems with walking are put into a wheelchair. Another child pointed out how the blackboard is lowered so children with a wheelchair could also easily access it. Children with hearing problems are taught by using sign language.

Thirdly, the children without disabilities were being helped by other children in class as well as in their transport from and to school. A girl with a physical impairment in Bunyonga, spoke timidly about how all children work together and that children with a physical impairment are being brought to school in their wheelchair by the other children.

### ***C) Ideas for Improvement***

When asked about ideas to improve the school for children with disabilities, the students in Bunyonga came up with three main answers: materials, knowledge about

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<sup>314</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>315</sup> Idem.

sign language and disability, and political speeches. The children explained how there is already material available for children with disabilities, but how more material could improve their learning even more. Concerning knowledge about disability, the children thought it was important that there is a lot of knowledge about sign language throughout the whole school. The teachers really need to have solid knowledge about the children with disabilities in order to interact with them adequately, they said. Finally, one came forward with the following idea: *“We need speeches from our leaders and control persons. [...] They have to tell what is bad and what is good for us to be able to use a good knowledge”*.<sup>316</sup> What he said can be interpreted in the way that there should be awareness-raising from above, from the higher political level.

In Masogwe, the children proposed that teachers had to give extra attention to children with disabilities when explaining things and see if he understood it. If the child did not understand, he has to explain it again individually. Another child said how teachers should give love to the children and finally, one child came up with a very bright idea: *“We should have a dialogue moment, between the children and teachers. And when the children do something wrong, they can ask pardon in this dialogue”*.<sup>317</sup>

### **5.3.1.3 Conclusion on the Experiences and Opinions of Children**

In general, all the children – with and without disabilities – had similar stories about the change in mind-set: children without disabilities used to have no respect for the children with disabilities and teachers were not teaching these children properly. Inclusive education training has sensitised them in a way that almost every child who spoke during the gathering now said more or less the same: a child with disabilities is like any other child and we should all study together. It works on both ways: the children without disabilities are happy that they have this knowledge and that they got to know the real stories of the children with disabilities, and the children with disabilities are

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<sup>316</sup> Idem.

<sup>317</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

happy because the other children help them now instead of hurting them. Also the teaching methods have changed in a way that children with disabilities feel like they are learning in the same way as the other children.

In HVP Gatagara, a specialised centre where also children without disabilities go rather than an inclusive school, it showed how children with disabilities are very positive about being in class with children without disabilities. It is a crucial factor for them and shows that, even although they are in a specialised centre where they get specialised care for their impairments, it is still seen as a benefit to have also children without disabilities in their class to make them feel more supported and self-confident.

In the three schools, the children proposed that the teacher should give even more individual attention and explanation to children who have trouble following the class. As mentioned before, in HVP Gatagara this can be due to the high number of children with disabilities in one class. In the primary schools of Bunyonga and Masogwe, this can be due to the large teacher/pupil ratio, as in both schools there were about 50 to 60 students in one class with only one teacher to teach them. It is understandable how difficult it is for the teacher in to give extensive and individual explanations under such conditions.

Next to discussing the opinions of children with and without disabilities in schools, the role and opinions of the parents are also an important factor when considering inclusive education. This will be described in the next paragraph.

### 5.3.2 Parents<sup>318</sup>

The author was able to talk to five groups of parents<sup>319</sup> of children with disabilities in the primary schools of Rubavu, Bunyonga, Masogwe, Gacurabwenge and Buguri. In every school, they have a ‘parent group’ for parents of children with disabilities. This ‘parent

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<sup>318</sup> All the statements from parents in this paragraph were obtained during conversations with parents at Rubavu 2 primary school on 21 April 2015, Bunyonga primary school and Buguri primary school on 23 April 2015 and Masogwe and Gacurabwenge primary school on 24 April 2015.

<sup>319</sup> Group sizes ranged from 2 parents in Buguri, Masogwe and Bunyonga to about 15 parents in Rubavu and Gacurabwenge.

group' comes together every now and then to discuss achievements and challenges which their children are facing at school. They also think of ways to support the achievement of 'education for all' in their school. In Masogwe for example, the parent group works with an 'auto finance' system to finance the needs of children with disabilities in the school.

### **5.3.2.1 Observed Experiences and Opinions**

The opinions and experiences of the parents can be categorised into three subjects:

- A) Change of attitudes and general experiences;
- B) Exclusion from and within education;
- C) Perceived challenges.

These subjects will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

#### ***A) Change of Attitudes and General Opinions***

At Rubavu Primary school, parents were very pleased with this new inclusive approach of the school. They told about how they are happy that their children could now interact with others. Before, some parents used to have a problem with their impaired child; they were ashamed. However, after they joined the 'parent' group, they changed their mind-set and learned that it is possible for children with disabilities to learn at school. One parent stated: *"Where inclusive education is, the teacher tries to focus on those who have a problem. My son [who has a disability] finished fifth of his class last term. The teachers have really tried their best to improve the ability of my mentally challenged child"*.<sup>320</sup> As previously explained under the concepts of this thesis however, it must be noted here that a teacher who focuses only on 'those who have a problem' is actually not very inclusive.

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<sup>320</sup> Rubavu 2 school visit, 21 April 2015.

Parents in Masogwe were positive as well about the school their children with disabilities were going to: *“I am very satisfied with the education of my child. A couple of years ago, the children used to stay at home. When they entered in inclusive education, we learned that these children are children like the others. The children who are included in education are getting good results”*.<sup>321</sup> They concluded the conversation by telling that they are confident that their child is going to have a good future.

A parent in Buguri even referred to children’s rights: *“...we know the rights of our children and that pleases us”*.<sup>322</sup>

Finally, in Gacurabwenge primary school, the parents were positive about the inclusive school project. They talked about how children with disabilities used to be isolated and would not go to school. However, this has changed and now they study together with the other children. One parent claimed: *“I had a child who was locked up at home because she could not speak. [...] Then, I received information about the project of HI and I took her to school. Now she studies with the others”*.<sup>323</sup> Another parent who had a child who could not speak even claims that her child started to speak after she started to attend school.

There was one mother whose child suffered from a severe and complicated impairment. Although she was positive about her child being able to go to school, this woman admitted that it would make her life easier if there would be some sort of a boarding school where these children with severe impairments can go during the week and stay there to rest. It was difficult for her to take care of her child and to bring her to school every day.

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<sup>321</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>322</sup> Buguri school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>323</sup> Gacurabwenge school visit, 24 April 2015.

## ***B) Exclusion From and Within Education***

In Rubavu, a mother told about how she tried to bring her child with disabilities to school<sup>324</sup> two times, but the school refused to take the child in. After pushing the school a third time, they eventually admitted her daughter. The problem now was that the other children would beat her child on her way home from school. Then the mother heard about the inclusive school project of Rubavu primary school and decided to move her child here. Her daughter had now been already for one term in Rubavu primary school.<sup>325</sup> The story which the mother told was quite recent and implies that exclusion from school and violence against children with disabilities are still going on in other schools. Another parent confirmed that this practice of beating children with disabilities is still going on: *“Because of their [children with disabilities] weakness, other children beat them and steal materials from them – ‘cause they can’t fight back. In a school like this, these children get help, but in the other schools it is still like that [that the children with disabilities are beaten]”*.<sup>326</sup> Parents also confirm the fact that children with disabilities are being hidden in their homes, as described by the existing literature earlier on.

In Bunyonga, a parent of a child with an impaired leg told a similar story about how attitudes have changed since the introduction of inclusive education. He also mentioned that children would call his child abusive names, like stated by the children in the previous paragraph.

Parents in all schools explained how they are trying to change the negative attitudes of some schools, other parents and living communities, e.g. in local meetings. In Masogwe specifically, a parent talked about how some parents did not understand the importance of bringing children with disabilities to school and how they would try to

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<sup>324</sup> School other than Rubavu II primary, unknown.

<sup>325</sup> Before that, she was for two years in the school mentioned in footnote 321. This means that the stories of this being beaten and excluded are quite recent.

<sup>326</sup> Rubavu 2 school visit, 21 April 2015.



sensitise them: *“If we find a child with disabilities, we can teach and sensitise the parents to bring them to school”*.<sup>327</sup>

### ***C) Perceived Challenges***

The parents talked about mainly three challenges: accessibility, medical treatment and school uniforms and materials.

The first challenge which the parents in Rubavu described was the accessibility. Parents talked about how it is sometimes not easy for them to take their children with disabilities to school because they have to carry them on their backs. Another parent explained: *“Those who have a disability are not strong and so they face the challenge of traveling from home to school. They fall down on the way and they are very tired when they finally get to school. That makes it difficult for them to learn at the same level as the others”*.<sup>328</sup>

This was however not the case in e.g. Masogwe, where parents and children talked positively about how children with disabilities come to school. One parent explained how children without disabilities are going to the families of children with disabilities and helping them to get that child to school.

One of the biggest challenges the parents mentioned in every school is the lack of proper medical treatment. In Rubavu, a parent explained that a lot of these families who have children with disabilities are poor; they don't have the means to buy regular medication needed for diseases such as epilepsy. This has an impact on their school experience as well as on the parents: children with e.g. epilepsy can get an episode in unfortunate places at school or on the way to school and parents will never have peace fearing for their child to get an episode. This problem was confirmed by a parent at Bunyonga, who stated: *“The big problem is that we don't have means for taking care of them [his children with disabilities]. They are not cared for from here [the school] and*

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<sup>327</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>328</sup> Rubavu 2 school visit, 21 April 2015.

*the hospital is very far so often we cannot get there*".<sup>329</sup> In Masogwe as well, parents claimed to be in need of medical care and materials for their children; for example one of the parents claimed his child needs a prosthesis.

At Gacurabwenge primary school, one parent mentions epilepsy medication as well and many parents were expressing the need for medical treatment when asking what the government could do to improve the lives of their children. A parent stated: "*We need medicines for which we have to travel far to get them. Sometimes we simply cannot travel so far. They [the government] should make these medicine available to us.*".<sup>330</sup> Another one said: "*My son has an impairment, but he still needs lots of materials and tools. This includes also finances to go to a specialised centre like HVP Gatagara to get treatment*".<sup>331</sup>

The lack of money is not only preventing parents to buy medical treatment for their children; it is also causing problems in terms of providing their children with school uniforms and school materials. One of the parents in Buguri proposed that the school or government would help them financially in obtaining these school materials and uniforms. However, this statement resulted in a heated discussion with a teacher who claimed that this should be always the responsibility of the parents and not of the school or government: "*It's the responsibility of the parents to buy uniforms for their children. Like the way you have to feed your children yourself, you should also give them school uniforms and materials*".<sup>332</sup>

In Gacurabwenge the parents were complaining as well that they don't have the means to buy material for their children. Parents expressed the need for *inter alia* walking aids and wheelchairs. Although the parent group is bringing money together every month to buy small things for the children, this is not enough. Most of them think it is the government who could help them with financing these needed materials.

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<sup>329</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>330</sup> Gacurabwenge school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>331</sup> Idem.

<sup>332</sup> Buguri school visit, 23 April 2015.

### 5.3.2.2 Conclusion on the Experiences and Opinions of Parents

First of all, all the parents were happy that their child was in an inclusive school project. Similarly to the children, they talked about a change in attitudes of parents, school community and even their living community. The attitudes they described are attitudes they experienced quite recently, which makes one believe that there are still a lot of living communities and schools that HI has not been able to reach and that are still hosting these negative attitudes. The parents in the different schools experienced various similar barriers and challenges in the lives of their children with disabilities: accessibility, materials and medical treatment. Although the first priority of the school does not lie in medical treatment, the lack of it surely has an effect on the learning and school experience of these children. In the case of e.g. epilepsy, which was mentioned by multiple parents, children could really get hurt while going to school. Furthermore, epilepsy attacks can cause permanent brain damage<sup>333</sup> which can impede the academic performance of the child in the future. Also materials like school uniforms, writing materials and tools are not affordable for every parent. Most parents saw this as a point with which the government could help them. Although the government was able to establish the 9YBE programme, it is not ‘as free’ as it shows to be. Although the parents don’t have to pay any school fees, there are additive costs which are not affordable for all of them. In Rubavu, the issue of physical accessibility of the school came up. This was not at all surprising; the roads around this area were absolutely terrible.<sup>334</sup>

Whereas children were more focused on working together and on their change in attitude, the parents were mostly concerned with the financial side of education. They were positive about inclusive education, although not all of them seemed to really grasp the fact that inclusive education means more than ‘all children together in one classroom’ only (integration). Furthermore, they were genuinely involved in the

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<sup>333</sup> Epilepsy Foundation, Status Epilepticus, <http://www.epilepsy-chicago.org/epilepsy-facts/seizure-types/status-epilepticus/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>334</sup> Rubavu lies in the proximity of a volcano area, which makes the underground very rocky. The day of the school visit, it had been raining which had caused all the sand to run down the road, leaving the road consisting of only rocks.

changing of attitudes towards disability around them; however the challenge of financing adequate materials and medical treatment remains.

### 5.3.3 Teachers<sup>335</sup>

Next to the opinions of children and parents, it is also the teachers whose opinions matter significantly when it comes to inclusive education. They are the key actors in inclusive education as they are the ones who actually have to include the children in their classroom.

#### **5.3.3.1 Observed Experiences and Opinions**

The author was able to talk to teachers at Bunyonga, Buguri and Masogwe. The opinions and experiences of the teachers are divided in four categories:

- A) General experiences;
- B) Teacher training;
- C) Perceived challenges;
- D) Ideas for improvement.

These categories will be further elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

#### ***A) General Experiences***

In Bunyonga, teachers were very positive about teaching in an inclusive school. One teacher said: *“I have learned a lot about inclusive education. There were a lot of nicknames we used to have for pupils with disabilities, like ‘one-eye’. Those names do not longer exist in this school”*.<sup>336</sup> Here, the teachers once more confirm what has been said about name-calling children with disabilities by children, parents and local

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<sup>335</sup> All the statements from teachers in this paragraph were obtained during conversations with teachers at Bunyonga primary school and Buguri primary school on 23 April 2015 and Masogwe primary school on 24 April 2015.

<sup>336</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

organisations. They also confirmed the difficulty with epileptic children: *“Epileptic students were avoided, because they said their attacks could be contaminating. Through training we knew that it was not contaminating”*.<sup>337</sup> They once more confirmed that before inclusive education came to their school, children with disabilities would not come to school and even if they would come to school, they would be treated like animals and be beaten.

The opinions of the teachers in Buguri were quite similar. One teacher however also points out that it is not always easy to teach in an inclusive school: *“It is very difficult to teach every individual child with disabilities, especially the ones with a mental impairment. However, we manage”*.<sup>338</sup> When asked how she tried to facilitate this process, she explained that besides from giving them enough attention, the other children were asked to help the children with disabilities.

The teachers in Masogwe explained what they think are the strengths of their inclusive school: *“The school is accessible; they [children with disabilities] can enter in class, the office and the toilet without a problem. Also the blackboard is accessible for the children”*.<sup>339</sup> They also talked about the Individual Education Programme<sup>340</sup>, which allows them to handle children with disabilities in a better way. This was also mentioned by the teachers in Bunyonga.

## ***B) Teacher Training***

In Bunyonga, the teachers were asked if they had got any education about how to teach children with disabilities during their teacher training. The answer was very clear: no. Before HI came and taught these teachers about inclusive education, the pupils with disabilities were simply being ignored. One teacher explained: *“Through trainings, we*

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<sup>337</sup> Idem.

<sup>338</sup> Buguri school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>339</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>340</sup> This is one of the pedagogic tools used by HI (cfr. Appendix 3) and entails monthly multi-disciplinary meetings to develop an individual learning programme for each child with disabilities which sets out the goals and needs for that child's education.

*learned how to manage any case of disability. It has taken us a long time of caring about them.*"<sup>341</sup>

New teachers who come to the school, often do not have training whatsoever on teaching children with disabilities. This is seen as a challenge by the teachers: *"This project was good, but it can vanish in a few seconds. There are a lot of needs that are not yet accomplished. We still need more support; the fundamental one is training teachers in Rwanda or even around the world"*.<sup>342</sup> In Buguri, the teachers were very positive about the training they received from HI. The fact that every teacher there had been informed about the inclusive teaching methods was pointed out by them as one of the strengths of their school. In Masogwe, the teachers explained how they had a psychology course during their initial teacher training and this helped them dealing with children with disabilities too. However, a real course about specifically inclusive education or how to teach children with disabilities had not been part of the standard teacher training curriculum.

### ***C) Perceived Challenges***

The teachers in the different schools discussed three main challenges: lack of time to teach and lack of teachers, poor financial situation of the parents and the lack of adequate infrastructure and materials. They also described the fact that some people still have negative attitudes towards children with disabilities.

One of the biggest challenges the teachers in Bunyonga experienced was a lack of time to meet every individual's need. This was due to the size of the classes which is directly connected to a shortage of teachers: *"We spend a lot of time caring for those students who have disabilities. What we need is more teachers. [...] Maybe I can have an assistant"*.<sup>343</sup> They explained how in the primary school classes they have 1 teacher for more than 50 students: this is far too much. They also complained about their salary

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<sup>341</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

<sup>342</sup> Idem.

<sup>343</sup> Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.

being too low; the same opinion was shared in Buguri. The problem of low salaries of teachers was even mentioned by a teacher of a private school.<sup>344</sup>

Furthermore, teachers in Buguri mentioned that the school was in need of more equipment and adapted materials and that a lot of families are financially not able to provide their children with school materials. As mentioned in the paragraph on parent's opinions, one teacher however felt that this is still the responsibility of the parents, and not of the school, nor the government. The same issue was mentioned by the teachers in Masogwe, who said: *"In general, the Rwandans are poor. A big number cannot pay the necessary material. When a child has to wear a uniform and he does not have one, it is a problem. It is the responsibility of the parents. But the parents also have children who do not have a disability [...] They buy more materials for the one who is not disabled"*.<sup>345</sup>

The teachers in Masogwe were however mostly concerned with infrastructure. Although the school was made quite accessible for children with disabilities, it was more the overall infrastructure that fell short. They needed *inter alia* more classrooms, more toilets and water for the toilets. When rain falls during class, it has to be paused: *"The buildings are old and of non-durable materials. For example when it rains, the class has to be stopped because we cannot hear each other"*.<sup>346</sup> There were few windows in the classroom and no electricity to light it up so it was too dark in the classrooms as well. This problem of accessibility is bigger than within the school alone. The teachers explained how the area around the school is quite hilly so sometimes it is a problem for children who have to come from far, especially for children with a physical impairment.

They brought up also other challenges which were mentioned before by parents and children, like materials for children with disabilities, attitudes of people living far from the school and also the lack of teachers and time to teach. Also here, there are 50 to 60 children in one class. It is difficult to teach in an inclusive way and they explain that

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<sup>344</sup> Anonymous teacher.

<sup>345</sup> Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.

<sup>346</sup> Idem.

when e.g. one child goes into ‘crisis’, the teacher has to occupy him/herself with this child while the other children are left on their own.

When asking if there are any types of disabilities which are better off in a special school instead of a mainstream school, the teachers mentioned children with mental disabilities and children with visual impairments: “*You cannot support them in the way that you can support children with a physical impairment*”.<sup>347</sup> This is an important remark, as from a human rights perspective, children with visual or mental impairments do have the right and should be able to be included in mainstream schools. Finally the teachers also mention the problem of children with disabilities continuing to secondary school, where teachers often have not yet been educated about inclusive education. This is an important point, as the right to inclusive education should be ensured on *all levels*<sup>348</sup> of education.

#### ***D) Ideas for Improvement***

The teachers in Buguri were very enthusiastic speakers and had many ideas for improving inclusive education in Rwanda. They listed the following ideas:

- Increase the integration of people with disabilities into decision making;
- sensitisation of the Rwandan population by organisations to change the negative mentalities;
- Provide equipment needed for children with disabilities in all schools;
- Stress the importance of inclusive education in the general education system;
- Adapt the curriculum to the needs of every child;
- Make the infrastructure accessible for everyone;
- Adapt the national exam criteria for children with disabilities;<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Idem.

<sup>348</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24(1).

<sup>349</sup> According to the teachers, girls have to obtain a lower mark to pass these national exams than boys. They propose to do the same for some children with disabilities.



- Provide secondary education for these children in the form of technical skills schools;
- Organisation of assistance in medical care by the government;
- Decentralise the NCPD;
- Remediation for human rights violations of persons with disabilities.

These are all relevant ideas and some of them are similar to the recommendations made in the final chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, the ‘decentralisation’ of the NCPD is reported by NCPD itself as one of their recommendations for overcoming challenges faced by children with disabilities in education.<sup>350</sup>

### **5.3.3.2 Conclusion on the Experiences and Opinions of Teachers**

It seems that the teachers had a more overall view of what the current challenges and needs in their school are: they discussed problems encountered by themselves, as well as challenges for parents and children.

In general, the teachers were happy that they are part of an inclusive school, although several of them made it clear that it is not always easy. There is a clear lack of teachers and the present teachers are struggling to respond to every child’s individual need. Some interning teachers in training in HVP Gatagara told about how they were scared for their future, as it is very hard and competitive to find a job as a teacher. There is a paradox here: at the one hand there are teachers in training who are afraid they cannot find a job and on the other hand there is an actual shortage of teachers throughout the country. The explanation for this paradox is that the government simply does not have the financial means to pay more teachers for the public schools; current teachers are already complaining about their salary. Even in private schools, teachers are not

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<sup>350</sup> NCPD, Annual Report, October 2011-June 2012, p. 51, available at <http://www.ncpd.gov.rw/index.php?id=121> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

satisfied with their salaries. Other challenges involve infrastructure, mind-set, materials and teacher training.

Like already stated, the teachers seem to have a good overview of the achievements and challenges concerning inclusive education in their school. According to them, for most challenges the solution seems to lie in the hands of the government.

#### 5.3.4 International Organisations, National Disability Organisations and Others<sup>351</sup>

Employees at HI, NCPD, NUDOR, and RUB as well as the director of HVP Gatagara school and the dean of the School of Inclusive and Special Education at the University of Rwanda, Evariste Karangwa, all expressed their opinions on inclusive education in Rwanda today. A remarkable point is that many of them<sup>352</sup> claimed that not all children with disabilities belong in a mainstream school, like also argued before by the teachers. Some specific impairments like visual impairment and severe mental impairment were mentioned among the impairments which should be taken care of in a specialised centre.

The various stakeholders all discussed the challenges which Rwanda is facing today regarding inclusive education. These challenges could be categorized in the following subjects:

- Attitudinal barriers;
- Physical accessibility;
- Materials;
- Teachers and teacher training;
- Government funding and policy implementation.

The attitudinal barriers described by the different organisations were already described extensively in the previous sub-chapter on ‘attitudes towards disability’. In summary,

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<sup>351</sup> All the information in this paragraph comes from meetings with RUB on 08 April 2015, CBM and HI on 09 April 2015 and NCPD and NUDOR on 10 April 2015.

<sup>352</sup> Employees at NCPD, NUDOR, RUB and HVP Gatagara.

negative attitudes towards disability are still current in Rwanda and are seen as one of the biggest challenges by these organisations. Remarkable was that an employee at RUB stated that the overcoming of this barriers should start in the living community and only thereafter to the level of the school; she did not see how it would work the other way around. However *“the fact that implementing inclusion needs societal change in attitudes first”*<sup>353</sup> is mentioned by UNESCO as one of the many misconceptions concerning inclusive education. The Director of the Economic and Social Empowerment Unit of NCP stressed the importance of using the right terminology, such as the fact that the term ‘with disabilities’ is preferred over ‘dis-abled’, as the latter implies that persons with disabilities are not *able*. The school director of HVP Gatagara called for a general change in mentality because of the fact that disability can eventually happen to all of us.

Vincent Murenzi from HI talked about the infrastructural barriers like accommodation and transport; these challenges were made clear from the opinions of teachers and children as well. An employee at RUB admitted that transport is a problem, but she asked the following: *“if the government does not even have money to pay the teachers, how could they pay for transport?”*<sup>354</sup> The Director of Economic and Social Empowerment Unit of NCPD stated that new school buildings are built in an accessible way and that the Ministry of Education is trying as much as they can to adjust the older buildings. Furthermore, employees from RUB, NCPD as well as NUDOR claimed equipment for children with disabilities and assistive devices to be one of the major challenges regarding education for children with disabilities in Rwanda.

Moreover, all organisations agreed that there is a lack of trained teachers with the right skills to educate children with disabilities in an inclusive way. One of the employees of NUDOR confirmed the fact that teachers are not being paid well. Evariste Karangwa explained that training for teachers regarding teaching children with disabilities has recently improved, yet he confirmed that there is a current lack of expertise in both education services and support services which provide e.g. assessment and

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<sup>353</sup> ED-2004/WS/39 cld 17402, p. 22.

<sup>354</sup> Interview with RUB employee, Kigali, 08 April 2015.

rehabilitation therapy. Also experts on sign language and ICT equipment are not sufficiently available.

Despite all these challenges, every organisation and stakeholder was convinced that the political will and commitment to bring inclusive education for children with disabilities strongly exists in Rwanda. However, they all agreed upon the – mostly financial – barriers the government is dealing with at the moment. According to Vincent Murenzi of HI, Rwanda is developing an inclusive education model on policy, service and community level. However, an employee at NUDOR claimed that the government should not only put a policy in place but should also find a way to enforce it. There are no ways of punishment in case of violations; there is no follow-up in any way. NUDOR advocated for a clear monitoring programme to ensure that the laws and policies are adequately being reinforced. Therefore, the employee at NUDOR mentioned the overall challenge to be the implementation of policies and laws.

How to overcome these challenges mentioned by the different organisations? Vincent Murenzi from HI explained a network should be built for strengthening the progress which involves different ministries and other special services. For example, there is the Rwandan Education Network Cooperation Platform with the Special Needs Education working group, but the Ministry of Health is not part of this cooperation, which it should be. This is indeed a valid remark, as medical treatment is a challenge mentioned by parents and teachers in the previous paragraphs. Vincent Murenzi further on states: *“We should build on the contextual reality to better respond to the needs we have. We have to try to assess in a thorough way what is needed, what can be done and how to address the challenges”*.<sup>355</sup> Again, the relevance of this thesis research is confirmed: the experiences by key stakeholders in education should be reported on and there should be clear policies and strategies developed, based upon these experiences. Vincent Murenzi adds to this that there should be more reporting of good practices throughout Rwanda so that these can set an example for the rest of the country.

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<sup>355</sup> Interview with Vincent Murenzi, project manager, HI, Kigali, 09 April 2015.

Now that the legal framework as well as all the experiences of key stakeholders in education are described, this information will be brought together and interpreted in the final chapter of this thesis, which will describe achievements, challenges and recommendations on the right to inclusive primary education in Rwanda.

## **CHAPTER 6: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This final chapter will synthesise the conceptual framework, legal framework and field research data into one comprehensive overview of achievements, challenges and recommendations concerning inclusive education for children with disabilities in Rwanda. This overview serves as an aid for academics, implementers and other stakeholders to improve the educational situation of children with disabilities throughout Rwanda.

### **6.1 Achievements**

Overall, the progress in Rwanda is marked by progress in the general education system, development of inclusive policies by the government, sensitisation and advocating by disability organisations and inclusive school projects which seem to be the closest thing to inclusive education there is in Rwanda. It should be noted that these achievements should not be seen separately from each other but as interrelating evolvments which influence one another.

As mentioned shortly in the introduction of this thesis, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in achieving universal primary education throughout the country. As stated in the EFA 2015 National Review Report of Rwanda, “*considerable progress has been made in terms to access to primary education since 2000 as a result of ongoing policy developments and strategies such as school construction, teacher recruitment, capitation grants, teaching and learning materials, girls’ education, and increased parent involvement*”.<sup>356</sup> Quantitative indicators have proven this progress: for example the 9YBE has caused an increase in primary schools of 27% from 2093 schools in 2000

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<sup>356</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 25.

to 2650 schools in 2013.<sup>357</sup> This increase of school infrastructure, together “*with the abolition of school fees in 2003 resulted in major increases in primary enrolment*”<sup>358</sup> have brought forth an increase of primary net enrolment rates from 72.9% in 2000 to 96.9% in 2013.<sup>359</sup> However, as mentioned multiple times<sup>360</sup> in this thesis, these net enrolment rates should be interpreted carefully.

The improvements of the education system in Rwanda in general surely have had also an impact on the access to education for children with disabilities. However, because children with disabilities experience many additional barriers in having access to primary education, these children should be given explicit attention in the national legal framework and measures have to be taken in order for them to equally benefit from the general improvements of the education system. The government has indeed included children with disabilities in their national legal framework. This can be read in chapter four of this thesis which explains how children with disabilities enjoy constitutional protection as well as increasing visibility in policies and strategic plans concerning education.<sup>361</sup> Rwanda is even among the rather small group of countries world-wide which guarantee the right to education in its constitution.<sup>362</sup> As can be read in the next paragraph<sup>363</sup> and like in many other countries, challenges however still remain concerning the implementation of these policies and strategic plans.

Another achievement is that the government is working closely together with civil society organisations and international organisations to create its policy framework. For example, the key priorities in the ESSP 2013/14-2017/18 were set up “*through a highly participatory and consultative process involving the entire education sector, including*

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<sup>357</sup> Idem, p. 26.

<sup>358</sup> Idem, p. 26.

<sup>359</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 27.

<sup>360</sup> Cfr. supra paras. 1.1, 4.1 and chapter 3.

<sup>361</sup> Cfr. supra chapter 4.

<sup>362</sup> Countries like Germany, US and Belgium for example have a lower level of constitutional guarantee for the education of children with disabilities. Source: World Policy Forum, Does the constitution guarantee the right to education for children with disabilities?, available at <http://worldpolicyforum.org/policies/does-the-constitution-guarantee-the-right-to-education-for-children-with-disabilities> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>363</sup> Cfr. infra para. 6.2.

*private sector, central and decentralised institutions and development partners (public, non-public, national and international including civil society)”*.<sup>364</sup>

The involvement of national civil society organisations could not have taken place if there were no such organisations to begin with. Indeed, various disability organisations emerged over the years in Rwanda, all advocating for the rights of people with various impairments throughout Rwanda. Next to their advocating and sensitising work, they are employing people with disabilities themselves and by this they are giving people with disabilities a role in society. All disability organisations are communicating together under one umbrella organisation, called NUDOR.<sup>365</sup> This was a real improvement for these organisations in efficiently coordinating their activities, communicating current affairs and sharing their experiences and opinions on important matters.

Because of the work of these disability organisations, the attitudes towards disability are currently improving in Rwanda. The main activities of these organisations include sensitisation and awareness-raising. Also some international organisations, like UNICEF and HI, have set education for children with disabilities as one of their key priorities. Furthermore, the field research in chapter five of this thesis showed that it is believed that genocide has made people more aware and respectful towards disability, as many people acquired physical impairments *during* the genocide and mental impairments *after* the genocide, e.g. in the form of post-traumatic stress.<sup>366</sup> It has raised political awareness and has made disability more visible. However, the battle against negative attitudes and stigmatisation is not yet won and Rwanda needs to further raise awareness, as can be read further on in the paragraph on challenges.<sup>367</sup>

To respond to this need of raising awareness on disability, the government as well is running disability-awareness raising programmes throughout the country: “*mobilisation and sensitisation activities are coordinated at the national level by MINALOC*<sup>368</sup>, in

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<sup>364</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 12.

<sup>365</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 284.

<sup>366</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.2.

<sup>367</sup> Cfr. infra para. 6.2.2.1.A.

<sup>368</sup> MINALOC is the Ministry of Local Government.



*partnership with other public institutions and organisations of Persons with Disabilities*".<sup>369</sup> Moreover, the Initial State Report to the CRPD of Rwanda claims that the government of Rwanda is screening a weekly TV programme which advocates for the rights of children, including those of children with disabilities.<sup>370</sup> There is even an International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Rwanda on the third of December.<sup>371</sup> These examples are only a few of all the sensitisation and awareness-raising programmes throughout Rwanda, organised by government as well as international and local organisations, which are described in the Initial State Report to the CRPD under Article 8 'awareness-raising'.<sup>372</sup>

Next to its national legal and policy framework, the government of Rwanda has also put in place an institutional framework which cares for the rights of persons with disabilities, with *inter alia* the NCPD. The NCPD was established by law N°03/2011 of 10/02/2011 and assists the government in implementing "*programs and policies that benefit persons with disabilities*".<sup>373</sup> It is a public and independent organisation which carries "*responsibility to lobby for the rights of Persons with Disabilities and in particular monitoring the respect of laws protecting persons with disabilities*".<sup>374</sup> The NCPD has developed 'Disability Mainstreaming Guidelines' which include a section dedicated to mainstreaming disability in education.<sup>375</sup> These Guidelines are highly useful as they are developed from an inclusive education perspective and provide very practical guidelines for schools and teachers.

Finally, projects by international organisations and local initiatives are a fine example for the rest of the country and are showing promising results. As stated before, it is important that these projects are recognised and reported on, in order for others to be

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<sup>369</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 19.

<sup>370</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>371</sup> *Idem*, p. 20.

<sup>372</sup> *Idem*, p. 19-21.

<sup>373</sup> NCPD, Mission of NCPD, available at <http://www.ncpd.gov.rw/index.php?id=44> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>374</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>375</sup> NCPD, Disability Mainstreaming Guidelines: "For a Rwandan Empowering and Inclusive Society", May 2014, available at [http://www.ncpd.gov.rw/index.php?id=105&eID=dam\\_frontend\\_push&docID=245](http://www.ncpd.gov.rw/index.php?id=105&eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=245) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

inspired by them and taking these as an example.<sup>376</sup> Private initiatives like UCC show that inclusion is possible; although the author did not participate long enough in order to experience whether teaching methods were really inclusive, teachers were well-educated in terms of teaching children with disabilities; teachers (and even children without disabilities) in UCC were e.g. fluent in sign language. The remark must be made that UCC is a private school; children without disabilities pay school fees and the school is privately funded. This means that UCC is more resourceful than the public schools in which HI ran its project. However, also in private schools resource problems remain, as was mentioned in chapter five where a school teacher from a private school claims she was not being paid enough.

The public schools in which HI introduced its inclusive education projects, were a good example in the sense that they showed that change and improvement is possible in mainstream, rural Rwandan schools. Progressive realisation of the human right to education for children with disabilities is truly visible in these schools and with the resources they have, they cater for the needs of children with disabilities to the best they are able. As the data in chapter five showed, the children, parents, teachers and school authorities are very positive and motivated about turning their school into an inclusive school; the will is really there. Moreover, some of them even refer to human rights, which reflects the human-rights-based approach that HI is using for its projects. Unfortunately, these schools and their teachers lack resources which creates many challenges, as will be described in the next sub-chapter. Finally, children with disabilities who cannot be catered for in mainstream schools yet, can be catered for in centres like HVP Gatagara, which are focused on caring for children with disabilities.

All these schools and centres can be examples not only for other schools, but as well as for showing community members, parents, children or just anyone that including children with disabilities in education is not only possible but also possibly beneficial.

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<sup>376</sup> Cfr. supra para 5.1.

## **6.2 Challenges**

However, when analysing the experiences by key stakeholders regarding inclusive education and comparing these to the international and national obligations of Rwanda in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities, various challenges concerning this matter are exposed.

### **6.2.1 Challenges of the Education System in General**

Some of the challenges which appeared were not only specific for children with disabilities, but were framed within the general education system in Rwanda as a whole. These challenges will now be described according to the four essential features of the right to primary education (the four A's) according to the ICESCR: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability.<sup>377</sup>

#### **6.2.1.1 Availability**

There is a lack of availability of teachers as well as adequate infrastructure in the general education system.

##### ***A) Of Teachers***

Some schools in Rwanda still have to make use of a 'double shift' system, in which one part of the children attend school in the morning, and the other part in the afternoon. This can be interpreted as a lack of availability of primary education in itself, as children only go to school 'part-time'. Although this was supposed to be only an 'interim solution'<sup>378</sup> to reduce the teacher-pupil ratios in schools, "*it has become mainstream in most, if not all, primary schools*".<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6.

<sup>378</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 37.

<sup>379</sup> Idem, p. 37.

The high pupil-teacher ratio is mainly due to lack of availability of teachers: there is a general shortage of teachers throughout Rwanda.<sup>380</sup> General Comment no. 13 on the right to education states under availability of education that “*all institutions and programmes are likely to require [...] trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries*”.<sup>381</sup> However, this shows to be a challenging issue in Rwanda. A recent UNESCO report on the shortage of teachers worldwide, revealed the statistics on this issue, as it stated that the average teacher-pupil ratio in Rwanda is 1:59<sup>382</sup> and the country is expected to reach their need for teachers only in 2023.<sup>383</sup> This report was however disputed by Antoine Mutsinzi, the Acting Head of the Department of Teacher Development Management of the Rwandan Education Board, who stated that there is no teacher shortage in primary schools and that the number of teachers as well as schools are increasing every year.<sup>384</sup> However, after analysing the experiences of children and teachers in chapter five, the UNESCO report seems to be raising a rightful argument on the shortage of teachers in Rwanda.

Moreover, although teacher salaries have increased over the years<sup>385</sup>, teachers are still claiming that they are not paid well enough.<sup>386,387</sup> Where at the beginning of this century the shortage of teachers was for a great part also due the genocide<sup>388</sup> during which more than 3000 teachers were killed or had to flee<sup>389</sup>, the cause of the problem seems to have shifted to a mostly budgetary one: the government fails to provide sufficient salaries for their teachers and they simply do not have the budget to hire more teachers.<sup>390</sup> However, according to the 2014 Report by UNESCO on teacher shortage, Rwanda is among the

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<sup>380</sup> UNESCO, Wanted: Trained teachers to ensure every child’s right to primary education, October 2014, available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002299/229913E.pdf> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>381</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6(a).

<sup>382</sup> Pupil-teacher ratios should not exceed 1:40, cfr. supra footnote 380, p. 7.

<sup>383</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 380, p. 10.

<sup>384</sup> Mfitimana, 2014.

<sup>385</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 142.

<sup>386</sup> Cfr. supra paras. 5.3.3.2 and 5.3.4.

<sup>387</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 17, p. 123.

<sup>388</sup> Abott et al., 2011, p. 117.

<sup>389</sup> Tarneden, 2006.

<sup>390</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.4.

countries which can “hire new teachers by maintaining similar levels of public expenditure on primary education as % of GDP (2012 or latest available year)”.<sup>391</sup>

### ***B) Of Infrastructure***

General comment no. 13 states under availability that “all institutions and programmes most likely require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water [...] teaching materials, and so on”.<sup>392</sup> Teachers claim that in general, school infrastructure is falling short. During the field research, teachers mentioned the need for more water, toilets and more durable materials in general.<sup>393</sup> This is confirmed by personal observations during school visits: the classrooms are too small, too dark and the weather is influencing the quality of teaching<sup>394</sup>, which should not be the case.

#### **6.2.1.2 Accessibility**

Schools should be accessible not only physically, but also economically and in a non-discriminatory way.<sup>395</sup> Education for children with disability aside, there are some general challenges concerning the physical and economical accessibility of schools in Rwanda. Teachers explained that schools are often surrounded by hilly environments, which makes it difficult for children (also without disabilities) who have to come from far away.<sup>396</sup> There is no transport arranged by the school nor the government to bring the children to school who live far away.

Regarding economical accessibility, Rwanda has taken a positive step forward in providing a free basic education programme (9YBE) which is to be extended (12YBE).

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<sup>391</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 380, p. 5.

<sup>392</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6(a).

<sup>393</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.3.C.

<sup>394</sup> For example the class has to be paused when it rains.

<sup>395</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6(b).

<sup>396</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.3.C.

However, although no school fees are to be paid, parents are asked to pay for *inter alia* parent-contributions, school uniforms and school materials like writing materials.<sup>397</sup> In schools where parent-contribution systems, e.g. for paying teacher bonuses were set up, parents as well as children claimed that children are sent home when their parents had not paid these parent contributions.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, the children get sent home if they don't have a uniform or the required school materials.<sup>399</sup> This shows that school is still economically inaccessible for some, and that “*it is children from better-off homes that continue to benefit disproportionately from the introduction of fee-free education*”.<sup>400</sup> This issue was raised as well by many parents, teachers and organisations during the field research for this thesis.<sup>401</sup> Although some teachers raised the opinion that it should always be the responsibility of the parents to buy uniforms and materials<sup>402</sup>, the government bears the primary responsibility to ensure the right to education is equally ensured for children from poor families and that “*the best interests of the student shall be a primary consideration*”<sup>403</sup>, as stated in General Comment no. 13 by the CESCR.

### 6.2.1.3 Acceptability

Questions can be raised about the quality of teaching in general, mostly because of the large pupil-teacher ratios which can be found in the schools. This matter of shortage of teachers was already touched upon under the principle of ‘availability’.<sup>404</sup> Next to that, Rwanda switched teaching language from mainly French and Kinyarwanda to only English in 2009. This makes that many teachers, who received their own education and teacher trainings in French, are struggling to teach in English. Literature shows that it is “*unclear to what extent the sudden switch from French (and Kinyarwanda) to English*

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<sup>397</sup> Williams et al., 2014, pp. 1-22.

<sup>398</sup> Idem, pp. 11-12.

<sup>399</sup> Idem, p. 13.

<sup>400</sup> Idem, p. 18.

<sup>401</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.

<sup>402</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.3.C.

<sup>403</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6(c).

<sup>404</sup> Cfr. supra para. 6.2.1.1.A.

*as a classroom language has impacted on quality*”.<sup>405</sup> During the field research, it was clear that teachers in primary school were mainly more proficient in French and only few of them spoke English really well.<sup>406</sup>

#### **6.2.1.4 Adaptability**

In General Comment no. 13 it is stated that “*education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings*”.<sup>407</sup> Rwanda has shown a remarkable example of adaptability in education, as after the genocide it has for example introduced reconciliation in the Rwandan community in and through education.<sup>408</sup> In the context of the policy framework discussed in chapter four, Rwanda is progressively ‘adapting’ its education for children with disabilities, as can be seen from the improvement in educational policies over the years. However, many challenges remain and education should not only be adapted in the sense of children with disabilities, but also to the specific needs of a certain community. This is concurrent with developing contextually adapted education policies, which is sometimes missing in the Rwandan policies. Regarding inclusive education, in the OHCHR Thematic Study on the right of persons with disabilities to education, it is stated that “*adaptability is also a need to develop schools capable of successfully educating all children, and is therefore a core principle of inclusive education*”.<sup>409</sup> The next paragraph will therefore describe the adaptability of the education system in general in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities.

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<sup>405</sup> Ansoms & Rostagno, 2012, p. 438.

<sup>406</sup> Observations during field research.

<sup>407</sup> E/C. 12/1999/10, 1991, Article 6(d).

<sup>408</sup> Mistiaen, 2013.

<sup>409</sup> A/HRC/25/29, 2013, p. 6.

## 6.2.2 Challenges Specifically for the Education of Children with Disabilities

Looking at the field research data, the people of Rwanda agree over the fact that the implementation of this political will onto the ground reality of Rwandan schools goes rather difficult. Children with disabilities are still facing barriers outside as well as inside the Rwandan education system.

### **6.2.2.1 Attitudinal and Conceptual Barriers**

One of the biggest challenges are the attitudes of school and living community – including parents of children with disabilities - towards disability and the general believe that children with disabilities are not able or entitled to go to school. On top of that, there seem to be certain conceptual barriers on the concepts of disability and inclusive education.

#### ***A) Attitudinal Barriers***

From literature research<sup>410</sup> as well as data collected on the field trip<sup>411</sup>, it is clear that children with disabilities still experience attitudinal barriers to being included in school as well as in society.<sup>412</sup> Although discrimination because of disability is prohibited according to Rwanda's constitution<sup>413</sup>, Rwanda's education policies do not contain clear strategies to overcome these attitudinal barriers in school. However, the CRPD states that the government has to train staff at all levels of education on disability<sup>414</sup>; hence the government is failing to implement this provision in its policies. Moreover, non-discrimination is a cross-cutting principle throughout all human rights treaties and these

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<sup>410</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.1.

<sup>411</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.2.

<sup>412</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.2.3.

<sup>413</sup> Cfr. supra para. 4.2.1.A.

<sup>414</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 6.



negative attitudes in Rwanda should therefore be seen as an urgent and pressing obstacle to overcome.

Organisations are still discovering children which were hidden away by their parents. Furthermore, experiences of the key stakeholders often showed negative attitudes in their living and school communities, dating from *before* HI came to their school. The fact that these experiences are fairly recent<sup>415</sup> implies that those negative attitudes are still present in other schools throughout Rwanda. Negative attitudes include *inter alia* name-calling, violent behaviour, stigmatisation and general discrimination. These attitudinal barriers are excluding children *from* school as well as *within* school.

### ***B) Conceptual Barriers***

Teachers, as well as many of the organisations and the director of HVP Gatagara school were of the opinion that the needs of some children with certain types of impairments are hard to cater for in a mainstream setting and are perhaps better off in a centre or school specialised for these types of conditions.<sup>416,417</sup> Mostly children with mental and visual impairments were mentioned. The segregation of children with visual and mental impairments from mainstream education would however not at all be according to the concept of inclusive education. Nevertheless, many of the key stakeholders who had this opinion at the same time claimed that they are in favour of inclusive education. Here, we find a contradiction within their opinions on inclusive education. Especially coming from organisations which advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, this could have a large impact on the development of inclusive education rights for children with especially visual and mental impairments. However, these opinions have to be nuanced: in the current reality of Rwanda few mainstream schools are truly inclusive and many indeed lack resources to cater for children with mental and visual impairments. Therefore, some stakeholders might not be able to envision how these

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<sup>415</sup> The project started only in 2013; hence, many experiences are from only a couple of years ago.

<sup>416</sup> Cfr. *supra* para. 5.3.3.1.C.

<sup>417</sup> Cfr. *supra* para. 5.3.4.

children could be included into a mainstream school in the *current* reality. Parents seem less concerned with this debate of mainstream schools vs. specialised centres. To the researcher's observations, parents are often already very happy with the mere fact of their children being able to go to school, regardless of the fact that it is an inclusive school. Hence, it sometimes seems like they are praising inclusive education without really understanding the full conceptual framework in which it is situated.

In summary, these conceptual barriers could impede the development of truly inclusive practices, as many awareness-raising and advocating is done by disability organisations as well as parents, while they don't always seem to have a profound understanding of the concept of inclusive education.

### **6.2.2.2 Accessibility**

As access to education for children with disabilities in a non-discriminatory way was already described in the previous paragraph on attitudes towards disability<sup>418</sup>, the physical and economical access to education will now be shortly described specifically for children with disabilities.

#### ***A) Physical Access***

Rwanda is a hilly country and this makes it hard for children with disabilities to get to school. This was confirmed by a report<sup>419</sup> by NUDOR which stated that there are some districts "*where children can walk about four kilometres to reach schools*"<sup>420</sup> and where "*some schools are up hills and can't be reached by children with disabilities*".<sup>421</sup> No transport is provided for these children. Roads are in bad condition. Parents sometimes have to carry their children on the back to take them to school. Traveling to

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<sup>418</sup> Cfr. supra para. 6.2.2.1.

<sup>419</sup> NUDOR, 2014.

<sup>420</sup> Idem, p. 11.

<sup>421</sup> Idem, p. 11.

school can be very exhausting for these children as well as for their parents. Again, educational policies are not able to grasp this challenge and turn it into concrete strategies to improve the physical access of children with disabilities to school.

Regarding the infrastructure itself, alternations like *e.g.* lowering the blackboard and foreseeing ramps have been made in many schools, however - as the Initial Report to the CRPD stated - schools generally have “*inadequate infrastructure*”.<sup>422</sup> This physical accessibility is part of a larger need of general physical accessibility for people with disabilities throughout the whole country to public facilities, decent roads and other services, as confirmed by Article 9 of the CRPD. As the director of HVP Gatagara School stated, a mentality change is needed in order for people with disabilities to equally their human rights: for example if you build a house, why not build one that is wheel-chair friendly and accessible for everyone, as disability can happen to all of us in the future?<sup>423</sup>

### ***B) Economic Access***

The issue of economic accessibility was already touched upon in the section on general challenges of the education system. However, as literature showed, “*disabled people [...] experience poverty more intensely*” than non-disabled poor people.<sup>424</sup> Therefore, the economical inaccessibility of the education system as such, is an even bigger threat for children with disabilities. This was largely confirmed by the experiences of teachers, parents and organisations by stating that many of these families with children with disabilities are poor and they cannot afford to buy the necessary school materials and uniforms.

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<sup>422</sup> CRPD/C/RWA/1, 2015, p. 35.

<sup>423</sup> Interview with HVP Gatagara school director, Gatagara, 15 April 2015.

<sup>424</sup> Thomas, 2005, p. 5.

### 6.2.2.3 Teacher Training and Expertise

As described above, there is a general shortage of teachers in Rwanda. This has an impact on the quality – if not the mere existence of - inclusive education as well, as teachers need to have enough time, knowledge and resources to teach in an inclusive way. Apart from this shortage of teachers, there is the lack of teacher expertise and inclusive education training.

First of all, provision four of Article 24 of the CRPD elaborates on the obligation of States to build capacity of well-trained teachers, “*who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille*”<sup>425</sup> and who receive disability awareness and training on teaching methods which can cater for the needs of all students. However, before the projects by HI, most of the teachers in the visited schools had never had any training on inclusive education.<sup>426</sup> And now that the project has ended, new teachers who come to work in the schools do not have training on teaching children with disabilities, apart from some who have had a course in psychology.

In summary, like in also many developed countries<sup>427</sup>, inclusive education training is not part of the standard primary teacher training provided by the government. Although some teacher training on inclusive education exist, like the School for Inclusive and Special Needs Education in Kigali, there is a need for inclusive education training incorporated within the standard teacher training as described in the below paragraph on recommendations.

An important remark is that mainly *primary* school teachers have acquired inclusive education skills at the moment, while *secondary* education teachers are often not aware of inclusive education.<sup>428</sup> Often, children with disabilities experience the same challenges as before when going from primary to secondary school; if most secondary

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<sup>425</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24(4).

<sup>426</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.3.B.

<sup>427</sup> European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, *Teacher Education For Inclusion Across Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*, 2011, p. 63, available at [https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/te4i-challenges-and-opportunities\\_TE4I-Synthesis-Report-EN.pdf](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/te4i-challenges-and-opportunities_TE4I-Synthesis-Report-EN.pdf) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>428</sup> Cfr. supra para. 5.3.3.C.

schools do not have teachers with inclusive education skills, these children will not have access to qualitative and non-discriminatory inclusive secondary education.

#### **6.2.2.4 Medical Treatment**

Parents of children with disabilities are experiencing a lack of access (physically as well as economically) to treatment for their children. As stated above, the standard of health of these children can have a serious influence on their access to and experiences within education. Although this issue falls mainly under the right to health – which is not the focus of this thesis – children with disabilities have the human right to the highest attainable standard of health according to the ICESCR Article 12 as well as the CRPD Article 25 and Rwanda has the obligation to ensure these rights. Moreover, in Article 24 of the CRPD it is stated that children with disabilities are to receive “*effective individualised support measures*”<sup>429</sup> in education, which could be interpreted as health measures. Finally, as noted in chapter five with the example of a lack of access to epileptic medication<sup>430</sup>: how can a child fully develop its educational potential if its health status is impeding this development?

#### **6.2.2.5 Government Laws, Policies, Strategic Plans and Lack of Data**

As described in chapter four, the current laws, policies and strategic plans are in need of clearer conceptual language and concrete context-based strategies in order to enhance the development of inclusive education in Rwanda.

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<sup>429</sup> CRPD, 2006, Article 24 (2e).

<sup>430</sup> Cfr. *supra* para. 5.3.3.2.

### ***A) Lack of Context – based Content***

As Lewis already stated in 2009, policies on education for children in Rwanda are missing “*reference to a process of developing policies based on the positive, inclusive elements of their own country’s culture*”.<sup>431</sup> Although it is positive that Rwanda is seeking to implement international obligations on a national level, local context and influences are often forgotten and this could impede the good functioning of inclusive education in Rwanda. Furthermore, the application of international standards and use of international concepts such as inclusion, without really understanding the full contextual meaning of it, can be impeding the implementation of that concept into national policies and further on onto ground reality.

### ***B) Weak Conceptual Language***

Policies and laws are vague concerning the description of inclusive education and the strategies to develop it. Although laws prohibit that children with disabilities are denied access to a mainstream school, the more relevant question now is how these children can be educated in that school in a non-discriminatory and equal way as children without disabilities. In other words: once these children with disabilities are integrated in a main-stream school, how can we make sure that they get quality inclusive education? The policies and strategies lack clarity on this matter, which impedes implementers to answer this ‘how’-question and to undertake goal-orientated action. This was already confirmed in 2009 by the policy review in the paper for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010.<sup>432</sup>

This weak conceptual language has also its impact on the schools. For example in report by NUDOR<sup>433</sup>, it was stated that there is a “*confusion between inclusive and special education: in some schools having children with different disabilities and children*

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<sup>431</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 24.

<sup>432</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>433</sup> NUDOR, 2014, p. 10.

*without disabilities in the same class and teach them different lessons means inclusive education*".<sup>434</sup> Therefore, government should provide schools with practical guidelines on how to include children with disabilities in their schools, as this thesis will suggest in the recommendations.<sup>435</sup>

### ***C) Accountability***

From field research, it was clear that many Rwandans had no understanding of the human right to education until the trainings by HI. If the people of Rwanda do not know their rights, they will also be not able to seek for remediation in the case of a violation of their rights. More-over, follow-up programmes by the government are not mentioned in policies: regarding parents hiding their children at home, it is only after an organisation like RUB steps in and tells the local authorisations that there is a child not going to school, that they undertake action.<sup>436</sup> There is no form of prevention or initiative from the local authorities themselves to search for children who are not allowed by their parents to go to school. In summary, it could be stated that there is a lack of enforcement of the laws which protect the education for children with disabilities and there should be more accountability of violators of this right to education.

### ***D) Lack of Data***

An overall lack of clear and reliable data on children with disabilities, inclusive education and all its indicators is persistent in Rwanda.<sup>437</sup> Moreover, state reports to the CRPD, CRC and ICESCR which could provide comprehensive information on the progress of inclusive education, are often filed late or not at all. The report on

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<sup>434</sup> *Idem*, p. 10.

<sup>435</sup> *Cfr. infra* para. 6.3.

<sup>436</sup> Interview with RUB employee, Kigali, 08 April 2015.

<sup>437</sup> Lewis, 2009, p. 40.

challenges faced by children with disabilities in Rwanda by NUDOR states that there is “no available data at different levels to serve as a baseline in all planning process”.<sup>438</sup> Moreover, during the collection of literature research for this thesis, it became clear that the research on inclusive education in Rwanda is rather scarce. Apart from some recent unpublished reports by disability organisations<sup>439</sup>, existing literature does not contain any reporting on the experiences of key stakeholders like children, parents and teachers on inclusive education. The overall lack of research is impeding policy-makers in developing relevant, goal-orientated policies and strategic plans.

### 6.2.3 Conclusion

It is clear that many challenges remain concerning the implementation of the right to inclusive education into the reality of the Rwandan education system in general, as well as specifically for children with disabilities. It should be however noted that many of these challenges, like teachers’ expertise, conceptual language and an effective policy framework are common in not only the African but rather a world-wide context. Every country has its own challenges and no country has – or will have any time soon – developed a fully inclusive education system. Hence, these challenges should not be seen as a critique towards Rwanda but as obstacles which Rwanda is currently facing in the transition from exclusion and segregation in education into integration and eventually inclusion.

### 6.3 Recommendations

As this thesis has discussed the achievements and challenges on inclusive education in Rwanda, it will now give some brief recommendations on steps which are to be taken by the government of Rwanda to respect, protect and fulfil the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities. Afterwards, a more detailed explanation of these

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<sup>438</sup> NUDOR, 2014, p. 13.

<sup>439</sup> NUDOR, 2014 & HI, 2015



recommendations will be given. It must be noted that these recommendations for Rwanda are more or less applicable to almost every country in terms of inclusive education.

The recommendations for the realisation of inclusive education in Rwanda are the following:

- Continuation of sensitisation on all levels of education and living communities;
- Human rights education for citizens, more specifically on the right to education;
- Increase of monitoring and accountability mechanisms concerning the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools;
- Teacher capacity building by mainstreaming inclusive education throughout the standard teacher trainings;
- Provide in-service training for current teachers on inclusive education;
- Continuation of the lowering of pupil-teacher ratio by employing more teachers;
- Create contextual and clear conceptual language on inclusive education and the social model of disability throughout both policies and sensitisation actions;
- Create clear and contextual strategies on how to progressively realise accessibility and quality of education;
- Update the ‘Special Needs Education’ policy into a new ‘Inclusive Education’ policy;
- Encourage further research on current practices of including children with disabilities into education.

A significant improvement in the last decade of attitudes towards disability was clear, however many negative attitudes, stigmatisation and discrimination remain throughout Rwanda. Therefore, the government, in partnership with international and local organisations, should continue their awareness-raising and sensitisation programs and campaigns. Not only parents need to know the possibility and advantages of sending their children with disabilities to school; every member of the community should be informed and educated about disability in order to get full inclusion of children with disabilities in society and schools. NCPD stressed that the local representatives have to

be sensitised first in order to change the mind-set of communities in which negative attitudes still have the upper hand.<sup>440</sup> Moreover, children and their parents need to be educated about their human rights and their right to education in order to recognise violations and seek remediation. As NUDOR said: the government can improve inclusion in Rwanda by informing their people about the law and their rights.<sup>441</sup> Local authorities as well should be educated and made aware of the rights of persons with disabilities in order to respond in an adequate way to violations reported by parents, children and other. Moreover, authorities should have a greater monitoring role and take more preventive measures for assuring every child goes to school.

Many teachers have had no education on teaching children with disabilities in their classroom. Although a module on inclusive education is now being included in the standard teacher training by the College of Education in Kigali, other teacher training colleges may not include these modules in their trainings. Moreover, if Rwanda really wants to achieve an inclusive general education system, inclusive education has to be mainstreamed throughout the teacher training curriculum in every module. Moreover, teachers who received no inclusive education training and are now teaching, should be systematically receive in-service trainings on inclusive education.

As already mentioned multiple times in this thesis, the government has made visible efforts to put laws and policies in place which protect the educational rights of children with disabilities. However, these policies should include strategies on how to realise and enforce the provisions set out in the policies. These strategies should include the development of practical guidelines for schools and other stakeholder, like the guidelines created by NCPD.<sup>442</sup> Moreover, it was clear that the concept of inclusive education was not consistently used and stayed quite vague in these policies. Therefore, this thesis calls for a new 'Inclusive Education Policy' to replace the 'Special Needs Education Policy' of 2007 and make it up to date according to CRPD standards. This new policy should include clear concept of the progress towards inclusive education and

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<sup>440</sup> Interview with the Director of Economic and Social Empowerment Unit of NCPD, Kigali, 10 April 2015.

<sup>441</sup> Interview NUDOR employee, Kigali, 10 April 2015.

<sup>442</sup> Cfr. supra footnote 375.

make a clear distinction between integration and inclusion into education, as many stakeholders do not seem to grasp this concept. Moreover, the distinction between disability and disease/impairment should be highlighted and the social model of disability should be explained and mainstreamed throughout this new policy. Some of the policies are also missing context-related strategies. For example, community feeling is very strong in Rwanda and this can be used as an advantage to develop strategies to achieve inclusive education.

Finally, some recommendations for further research can be made. Firstly, there is still a lack of reliable quantitative data on children with disabilities in Rwanda.<sup>443</sup> This is partly caused by the lack of diagnosing children with disabilities. Many children are not diagnosed or misdiagnosed. This can lead to underestimation of the actual needs of children with disabilities throughout the country. Moreover, clear statistical data is needed for developing clear policies and strategies. Secondly, there needs to be more reporting of practices of inclusive education throughout the country. These practices can set an example for other schools and communities to improve the situation for children with disabilities in education and society. It is also important that, like in this research, all key stakeholders and their opinions are followed-up and reported on in order to know the further needs of these people and develop adequate policies catering for those needs. Finally, there is a need for studies on a larger scale than this Master's thesis. More schools and centres, also those in which no projects by international or local organisations are run, need to be followed-up and reported on.

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<sup>443</sup> NUDOR, 2014, p. 14.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **CONCLUSION**

The task of this thesis was to explore the gap between Rwanda's right-to-education framework for children with disabilities and its practical implementation, from the perspective of children, parents, teachers and disability organisations. This gap exists on a world-wide scale and no country has established a completely inclusive general education system yet. However, because of the particular situation of Rwanda, given their relatively successful new education system as well as the fact that the country is situated in a region where persistent negative attitudes towards disability are known to take place, the researcher wanted to investigate if and how children with disabilities in Rwanda are experiencing inclusive education.

Having analysed the literature, the legal framework and the field research data, it became clear that there is indeed a visible gap between the international commitments Rwanda has made and their implementation; not only towards the right of children with disabilities to education, but towards education in general. Although primary education is free from school fees, financial barriers are not eradicated. Moreover, although primary net enrolment results are promising, the quality of education is questioned – mostly because of a shortage of teachers. Concerning the right to education for children with disabilities, Rwanda has made clear efforts in the past ten years to improve the visibility of children with disabilities in throughout laws and policies. However, like in every country, the implementation of this framework on the ground goes rather slowly. Even with the help of international organisations such as HI, the reality for children with disabilities varies significantly from community to community and from school to school.

The implementation gap is most visible in the aspects of education which are lacking – mostly financial – resources. From a human rights based perspective, providing for adequate infrastructure, learning materials, teacher employment and training are all aspects of the right to education which Rwanda should 'progressively realise' according

to their 'available resources'. Yet there are also educational obligations which do not fall under the principle of 'progressive realisation' and which should be implemented immediately, such as free primary education and immediate eradication of discrimination in education. Rwanda has met these obligations successfully by setting up the 9YBE programme and by making children with disabilities a key priority in their educational policies. Rwanda should keep working together with disability organisations in raising awareness and educating the population on disability rights, as negative attitudes are persistent and are continuing to be one of the main causes of exclusion of children with disabilities from education in Rwanda up till today.

To conclude, the government has to keep respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education for children with disabilities in Rwanda and progressively realising this right for all Rwandans. For developing laws, policies and practical guidelines, the government should take into account the opinions and experiences of various stakeholders, especially those who are experiencing the everyday reality of going to school like children, parents and teachers. Although the primary responsibility lies with the government, schools as well have to make commitments towards an inclusive school policy. Moreover, civil society organisations as well as children, parents and teachers are playing an important role in educating those around them as well as themselves on the right to inclusive education. The visited school projects have shown that it is possible to reach for inclusion in Rwanda; however these current practices should be turned into a nationwide movement which is supported by all levels of society. Only then will Rwanda have a chance to close the implementation gap and establish inclusive education for all.

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8. UCC, homepage, available at <http://ubumwecentre.org> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

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10. UNESCO, Education for All Goals, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).
11. UNOHCHR, Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard, available at <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> (consulted on 09 July 2015).
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13. World Policy Forum, Does the constitution guarantee the right to education for children with disabilities?, available at <http://worldpolicyforum.org/policies/does-the-constitution-guarantee-the-right-to-education-for-children-with-disabilities> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

## **Interviews**

1. Buguri school visit, 23 April 2015.
2. Bunyonga school visit, 23 April 2015.
3. Gacurabwenge school visit, 24 April 2015.
4. HVP Gatagara school visit, 14 April 2015.
5. Interview with anonymous, Director of the Economic and Social Empowerment Unit, NCPD, Kigali, 10 April 2015.
6. Interview with anonymous, employee, CBM, Kigali, 09 April 2015.
7. Interview with anonymous, employee, NUDOR, 10 April 2015.
8. Interview with anonymous, employee, RUB , Kigali, 08 April 2015.
9. Interview with anonymous, HVP Gatagara school director, Gatagara, 15 April 2015.
10. Interview with Vincent Murenzi, project manager, HI, Kigali, 09 April 2015.
11. Masogwe school visit, 24 April 2015.
12. Rubavu 2 school visit, 21 April 2015.
13. UCC school visit, 21 April 2015.

## APPENDIX 1: UBUMWE COMMUNITY CENTRE<sup>444</sup>

The UCC was founded by two friends, Frederick Ndabaramiye and Zacharie Dusingizema, in November 2005 in Rubavu.<sup>445</sup> They were assisted in founding the centre by a Californian woman named Jessica McCall. Frederick himself is living with an impairment: *“As a fifteen-year-old boy in his native Rwanda, Frederick Ndabaramiye was dragged from a bus and brutally attacked by Interahamwe rebels. When he refused to kill 18 fellow passengers the rebels hacked off Frederic’s hands with machetes and left him for dead. [...] Most of Frederic’s family had been slaughtered and his mother, who remained alive, did not have the resources to care for him after he lost his hands. He met Zacharie Dusingizimana, a young teacher at the orphanage”*.<sup>446</sup>

Because of their friendship, Zacharie got to know what it is like to live with a disability like Frederick. This was their incentive to start a centre where children in a difficult situation like his had a place to go and could develop their potential.

The UCC consist of two main parts: the inclusive school and the special centre for persons with disabilities.

### 1. Special centre

In the special centre for persons with disabilities there are transitional classes, the skills programme and a special needs class.

In the transitional classes they work with the children to asses if they are ready to go to either the skills programme or the inclusive school. These children mostly have a mental impairment. There is no fixed time limit on this class and they also learn here how to take care of themselves, they do exercises and get physiotherapy.

Next to the children who come from the transitional class, the skills programme is mainly for young adults who did not get the chance to go to school or the ones who

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<sup>444</sup> All the information in Appendix 1 comes from <http://ubumwecenter.org> (consulted on 09 July 2015) and from UCC school visit, Rubavu, 21 April 2015.

<sup>445</sup> UCC, homepage, available at <http://ubumwecentre.org> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>446</sup> Idem.



dropped out of school to early. Here, they are learning how to sew, knit and make handcraft. These people are even helped afterwards by starting up cooperatives in their own region.

The special needs class is for the very young children with severe impairments like cerebral palsy, autism or multiple impairments. It is a '100% care class' which means they are provided with health care services every day. They receive physiotherapy from a professional physiotherapist two times a week and the physiotherapist actually shows the other care givers how to handle these children.

There is now also a skills class for the non-disabled community in the UCC; a computer skills class and literacy classes. The centre also has an 'outreach programme' in which they do home visits for persons with very severe impairments or persons with disabilities who are very old<sup>447</sup> and lonely and who are seen as a burden for the family. With this programme they find out the needs of these people and respond to these in an individual way by providing *inter alia* hygienic services, health care services and food.

## **2. Inclusive school**

The other part of the centre is the inclusive school. The school contains classes at pre-school level and primary level. Like the director of the UCC stated: "*Our mission is to include persons with disabilities in every sector by educating them.*"<sup>448</sup>

There are 45 children with a disability included in the school of 410 children. Classes which contain learners with a hearing impairment are being taught by teachers who are specialised in sign language. In this way, children without disabilities are also getting to know sign language and they can communicate with their deaf peers on e.g. the playground. There is even one deaf teacher in the centre. Before starting class in the morning, the teachers talk about how to take care of the children with disabilities and how to treat them with respect.

The centre's home visit programme is still being supported by Jessie's Place, a non-profit organisation founded by UCC co-founder Jessica McCall. Ninety percent of the

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<sup>447</sup> With this they mean older than 50 years old.

<sup>448</sup> UCC school visit, 21 April 2015.

operating expenses are covered by Columbus Zoo and Partners in Conservation. The other 10% is covered by Jessie's Place, the government and some other organisations and individuals as well as the income from sales of crafts made in UCC. The inclusive school is also funded by school fees paid by the children without disabilities, as it is a private school.

The centre is working on 'spreading' inclusive education throughout the country: for children with disabilities who live far away from Rubavu, the centre looks for the closest school which that child could go to. Then UCC helps that child in getting proper education in that school by talking to the school authorities and ensuring they understand what inclusive education means. They search a way to provide the school with adequate materials and perform follow-ups. There is also a follow-up programme for the children who leave UCC primary school to go to secondary school. When the secondary school is e.g. not accessible, they talk to the school authorities and organisations who can help overcome this problem.

## APPENDIX 2 : HOME DE LA VIERGE DES PAUVRES

### GATAGARA<sup>449</sup>

Home de la Vierge des Pauvres (HVP) lies on one of the many mountains in Rwanda, Gatagara, and was the first centre for “rehabilitation for persons with disabilities in Rwanda”.<sup>450</sup> The centre was founded in 1962 by a Belgian catholic brother, Joseph Fraipont Ndagijimana. Since his death in 1982, it was and still is being run by the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity.<sup>451452</sup> The goal of HVP Gatagara is to identify, take care of, educate and reintegrate children with mental and physical impairments. The organisation has other centres throughout the country, but HVP in Gatagara is the historical foundation and thus the oldest centre in Rwanda for children with disabilities.

The centre is split up in two parts: an educational centre and a medical centre. In the medical centre, not only children but also adults who need mostly orthopaedic surgery can come to get their treatment. There are *inter alia* a pharmacist, orthopaedic workshop, operation theatre, and physiotherapy ward in the centre.

The other part of the centre is the educational centre with a primary school and a vocational training school. In the primary school there are mostly children with disabilities. However, in every class there are also some children without disabilities who live in the local villages around the centre. This makes that in a total of 317 students, there are 266 students with a disability. The director of the school tells: *“Obviously we see that accommodation is suitable for learners. We want students or learners or anyone who comes to the centre to be able to move freely without any*

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<sup>449</sup> All the information in Appendix 2 is obtained through HVP school visit from 10 April 2015 to 16 April 2015, interview with the HVP Gatagara school director on 15 April 2015 and [www.gatagara.org](http://www.gatagara.org) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>450</sup> HVP Gatagara, Bienvenue, available at [www.gatagara.org](http://www.gatagara.org) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>451</sup> The Brothers of Charity were founded in 1807 by a Belgian brother names Petrus Jozef Triest and grew out to become an international religious congregation which has various societal working domains like education and health care. Source: Brothers of Charity, [www.brothersofcharity.com](http://www.brothersofcharity.com) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>452</sup> HVP Gatagara, Historique, available at [www.gatagara.org](http://www.gatagara.org) (consulted on 09 July 2015).

*impediment. This makes us different from other schools and centres. We are happy to make sure that all those impediments are taken away.*<sup>453</sup>

The teachers who teach in HVP have had a normal teacher training, of which the standard curriculum does not contain any specific courses about teaching children with disabilities. However, the director tells how his teachers are motivated to learn sign language from the other teachers who are specialised in this and how sometimes they do arrange for training. This involves at the one hand specialists who come to the centre to give training and at the other hand they choose teachers to go for training elsewhere. When the selected teachers returns after his training, he is ought to teach the other teachers what he has learned.

Instead of a mainstream inclusive school, HVP Gatagara seems to be more of a specialised centre for children with disabilities that also welcomes children without disabilities. Nevertheless, children with and without disabilities are learning side by side, which makes it an interesting project which was worth visiting.

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<sup>453</sup> Interview with HVP Gatagara school director, Gatagara, 15 April 2015.

### **APPENDIX 3: ‘INCLUSIVE FUTURES IN RWANDA’ BY HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL<sup>454</sup>**

The international disability rights organisation Handicap International (HI) has supported inclusive education in Rwanda since 2007.<sup>455</sup> In 2013, the organisation started a two years long pilot project on inclusive education in Rwanda through a partnership between the government of Rwanda and the United Kingdom, the so called ‘Innovation for Education’ partnership. The consortium member is Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and partners include the Rwandan Education Board, Centre de Formation Agricole de Petit Alivage de Kamonyi in Kamonyi and Ubumwe Community Centre (UCC)<sup>456</sup> in Rubavu.

The project, ‘Inclusive Futures in Rwanda: establishing and applying a set of national norms and standards in inclusive education’, was set up in 2013 by this Innovation for Education Partnership to “*define, develop and test a set of norms and standards in the two districts of Rubavu and Kamonyi*”<sup>457</sup> and to enable “*an equitable and inclusive, lifelong and quality learning for children with disabilities and those with special educational needs*”.<sup>458</sup>

Handicap International worked on three levels in this project: the policy level, the service level and the community level. The five key activities on the different levels were the following:

*“1. Production of papers of roles, norms/standards and a set of 9<sup>459</sup> tools;*

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<sup>454</sup> All the information in this paragraph was obtained by interview with Vincent Murenzi, project manager, HI, Kigali, 09 April 2015 as well as the ‘Inclusive Futures in Rwanda Summary Report 2015’, HI, 2015, and Ministry of Education, Innovation for Education, available at <http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/innovation/spip.php?Article387> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>455</sup> HI, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>456</sup> Cfr. supra appendix 1.

<sup>457</sup> HI, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>458</sup> Idem, p. 5.

<sup>459</sup> On the website (cfr. supra footnote 454) it is stated 9, but in the IFR report it is stated 8 – as in the IFR these 8 tools are described more precisely and this is not the case on the website, it is assumed that there are actually only 8 tools.

2. *training of 15 REB inspectors, 79 local authorities, 32 head teachers, 53 trainers of trainers, 501 teachers and 362 parents on developed papers and tools;*
3. *dissemination of papers and tools at all levels;*
4. *testing the developed papers and tools*
5. *sharing lessons learnt and best practices between two pilot districts.*”<sup>460</sup>

The pedagogical tools which are mentioned among the key activities include the following: “Educational Assessment Form, Individual Education Plan, Academic Progress Record Tool, Resource Room Development Guide, Community Involvement Guide, Inclusive Pedagogical Principles’ Checklist, Accessibility Development Tool and School Reporting Template Form”.<sup>461</sup>

On the policy level, HI has e.g. worked together with the Ministry of Education to develop an adequate education policy<sup>462</sup> in order to “*support the government of Rwanda to offer chances and opportunities to education for all children as free and compulsory*”.<sup>463</sup> On the service level, they have e.g. done capacity building for teachers and school authorities. On the community level they informed parents about inclusive education and set up parent committees at the schools; these committees then go from house to house to find children with disabilities and to mobilise others.

Part of the ‘Inclusive Future in Rwanda’ project are 12 pilot school projects in Rubavu district which is in the north-east of Rwanda, close to the Congolese border. In Kamonyi district, which is close to the capital Kigali, there are 12 pilot schools as well. The five inclusive school projects which were visited were Rubavu II in Rubavu district as well as Masogwe, Buguri, Bunyonga and Gacurabwenge in Kamonyi district. Since the start of this project in 2013, the number of children with disabilities in the school projects in those two districts was increased from 380 children to 1296 children with all types of disabilities.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Ministry of Education, Innovation for Education, available at <http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/innovation/spip.php?Article387> (consulted on 09 July 2015).

<sup>461</sup> HI, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>462</sup> For example the ESSP 2013/14-2017/18, Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013.

<sup>463</sup> HI, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>464</sup> Idem, p. 8.

When visiting the schools, there was always a warm welcome by school authorities, teachers, children and parents. In some of the schools, songs about the benefits of inclusive education and about how “*a child with a disability is just like any other child*” were sung upon arrival. A strong community feeling was tangible.