

# URUNANA

## rw'Abarezi



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# Getting all children in school and learning



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Address:

REB: P.O. Box 3817 Kigali, Rwanda

@REBRwanda

@RwandaEducationBoardOfficial

[www.reb.gov.rw](http://www.reb.gov.rw)

[rwanda.vvob.org](http://rwanda.vvob.org) | E: [info.rwanda@vvob.org](mailto:info.rwanda@vvob.org)

KG 565 st, House No 6, Kacyiru, P.O. Box 3776, Kigali-Rwanda

+250 785 702 442 @VVOBRwanda

VVOBRwanda VVOB Rwanda

### THE EDITORIAL TEAM

**FOR REB:**

Innocent Hagenimana  
Eugene Fixer Ngoga  
Ange Felix Habasa

**Editor:**

Etienne Ntawigira

**Design & Layout:**

Etienne Ntawigira

**FOR VVOB:**

Marianne Kiggundu  
Solange Mukayiranga  
Henriette Umulisa  
Etienne Ntawigira  
Julius Sebuhalala  
Sandrine Ishimwe

**Photographs:**

Etienne Ntawigira  
Innocent Hageninama  
Sandrine Ishimwe



## FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Urunana rw'Abarezi magazine, a platform for teachers, school leaders and education stakeholders to share experiences and good practices towards improving the quality of education for all learners.

This edition focusses on "inclusive education: getting all children in school and learning." It explores how schools are implementing inclusion and how they are dealing with related challenges.

The Government of Rwanda is committed to the principle of promoting equalisation of opportunities for all its citizens. It is in this regard that it is also the mission of the Ministry of Education to educate and train all the marginalised groups of children and youths, to enable their ultimate inclusion and participation in all aspects and sectors of the society. These values also form the foundation of the Education sector policy strategic objectives, envisioning developing conditions that are adequately conducive for all learners and educators to interact in a barrier-free and child-friendly educational environment, where the consideration of merits, capabilities and potentials, override differences based on ethnicity, religion, socio-economic backgrounds; gender, disability, health status, or any other marginalizing distinctions.

The Ministry of Education is committed to putting in place the necessary provisions and support for the education of the educationally vulnerable children and youths, referred to as learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) aims to coordinate and fast track basic education programmes and activities aimed at providing the quality education to all categories of Rwandans. I call upon all school leaders to provide a secure, accessible and supportive environment in which all Rwandan children, without any form of discrimination can flourish.

As you read this, I know that you are thinking of the many inclusion-related challenges at your school that you have to deal with day in, day out that are not yet resolved. Reading this edition of the magazine is an opportunity for you as a teacher and/or school leader to learn from schools that are doing well or have already overcome some of the challenges which you are still facing, as far as implementing inclusive education is concerned. At the same time, you may be reading about schools that are still struggling with issues that you already overcame. If this is the case, I hope that you will also contribute to this platform by sharing your experiences, lessons learnt and good practices to help other schools achieve inclusive education—I encourage you to do so.

I would like to acknowledge the hard-work and continued commitment of school leaders, teachers, parents, community



members as well as local leaders for ensuring that barriers to inclusive education are removed.

The contribution and continuous support by different partners to promote the quality of education in Rwanda is also highly appreciated. I wish to commend VVOB-*education for development* for its continued efforts and support in building the capacity of teachers and school leaders in Rwanda. In partnership with VVOB, the Mastercard Foundation through Leaders in Teaching initiative, at secondary school level; and the University of Rwanda – College of Education (UR-CE) and REB, relevant certificate and diploma courses are offered to primary and secondary school Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers, District Education Directors and Officers, Sector Education Inspectors, School Based Mentors and STEM Subject Leaders to improve the quality of education.

We will continue to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure inclusion and optimum participation of all categories of learners with Special Educational Needs within the full range of educational services provided in Rwanda.

We dedicate this edition to all of you who work tirelessly to ensure that all learners get in school and learn.

Dr. Nelson Mbarushimana,

Director General

Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)



# Promoting Inclusive and Special

By Eugene Fixer Ngoga & Ange Felix Habasa, Special Needs & Inclusive Education (SN&IE) Unit, REB

**S**pecial Needs & Inclusive Education (SN&IE) Unit works to implement Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)'s mandate on mainstreaming gender and ensuring equitable access to high quality education for students with hearing impairments, students with vision impairment, students with physical disabilities, learners with intellectual challenges, among others. This unit also implements REB's mandate on primary and secondary education, early childhood and adult education.

## Every child has the right to quality education

According to Disability Awareness in Action (DAA), an international human rights network run by and for people with disabilities, people with disabilities frequently live in deplorable conditions, due to the presence of physical and social barriers, which prevent their integration and full participation in the community. DAA also argues that millions of children and adults worldwide are segregated and deprived of their rights, which is unacceptable.

According to UNICEF, Inclusive Education means all children in the same

classrooms, in the same schools and real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded - not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too. UNICEF believes that inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. The success of including all the learners such as learners with disabilities depends on the involvement of the whole community i.e. parents, local community and school community.

In Rwanda, few years ago, a limited number of learners with disabilities could go to school. However, parents and community's mindset has changed as the Government promotes education for all without any form of discrimination. The approval of the revised Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy in 2018 by the Cabinet demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting inclusive education. This policy builds upon the previous special needs education policy (2007) and incorporates new and revised policies at the national and international level, including but not limited to the Rwandan Integrated Child Rights Policy (2011), Ministerial Order determining modalities for special treatment of persons with disabilities in schools (2016), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which Rwanda is committed.

The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy aims to put in place coordinated and appropriately resourced special needs and inclusive education services, underpinning the education sector goals, as well as the national strategies with respect to education for development.

In line with this policy, SNIE Unit was established at the REB in 2021. REB believes that everyone should have equal access to all services and facilities in the community, including educational services and facilities. REB also wants to remove barriers related to people with disabilities such as negative attitudes, inaccessible environments,



Dr. Mbarushimana Nelson, DG REB supporting a student with a physical disability who was on his way from HVP Gatagara inclusive school in Nyanza district.



# Needs Education: REB's priority

bullying, misuse of resources, poor peer support, inflexible curriculum, lack of communication, lack of role models, ignorance, fear, poor teaching, and low expectations.

Inclusive education is a key component of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and the overall vision of expanded access and quality of education in Rwanda. One of the key principles of the curriculum framework is that schools should be inclusive and have responsibility to ensure learning is organised so that every child is valued.

The following are the key achievements with regards to Special Needs and Inclusive Education, since July 2019:

## Trainings:

✓ 786 teachers from Inclusive and Special Educational Needs schools were trained in Sign Language (SL)

✓ 855 primary and secondary school teachers were trained on Inclusive Education

✓ TTC principals and Director of Studies (16), DDEs (30) and SEOs (30), REB staff (45), Ministry of Education staff (13), UR-CE academic and non-academic staff (32) trained on Inclusive Education

## Development of resource documents:

✓ Adapted curriculum for learners with intellectual challenges was developed. REB is planning to train teachers on how to use this curriculum and distribute copies to schools;

✓ A draft Teachers' Guide for the adapted curriculum was written and awaits validation

✓ Training manuals on Inclusive Education were developed;

✓ Special Needs Education (SNE) Assessment tools and Individual

“Getting all children in school and learning cannot be attained without involvement of parents, local leaders, and the school community.”

Education Plan (IEP) format were developed

✓ A toolkit for teacher trainers on practical activities for Inclusive Education (IE) was developed

✓ A guide to IE in pre-primary, primary and secondary education was developed

## Infrastructure

✓ Four special schools/centres and one inclusive school were equipped with specialized teaching-learning materials

## Ongoing activities

✓ Distribution of training manuals to schools

✓ Printing and distributing of the adapted curriculum to special schools and centres

✓ Training of teachers in Gakenke, Nyaruguru and Karongi, Nyabihu, Musanze, Rubavu, Gisagara, Huye and

Rutsiro districts

✓ Developing a Teachers' Guide to the adapted curriculum

✓ Training teachers on the Guide to adapted curriculum

✓ Making follow-up on the awareness raising toolkit with UNICEF

✓ Working hand in hand with IE Technical Working Group to coordinate development partners' activities

✓ Working hand in hand with JICA to install accessible toilets at primary schools to contribute towards more inclusive school environment for Children with Disabilities and improving their retention

Recently, the World Bank through Inclusive Education Initiative, provided support to the Rwandan Government to strengthen the education sector, especially inclusive education. Activities supported include magnifying ongoing efforts on sustainable, systemic change by government and development partners in inclusive education, with a focus on systems strengthening, capacity building, improving data systems, and scaling innovations on the implementation of the Marrakesh treaty in Rwanda.

Getting all children in school and learning cannot be attained without involvement of parents, local leaders, and the school community.

The Marrakesh visually impaired and otherwise print disabled (VIP) Treaty is a treaty on copyright adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 27th June 2013.

According to the Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda n° 27 of 07/09/2020, the law N° 013/2020 of 07/09/2020 signed by President Paul Kagame approves the accession of Rwanda to the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

# Creating a safe environment for learners with disabilities



By Etienne Ntawigira  
Communication Advisor, VVOB

**G**.S Rosa Mystica is a 12 Year Basic Education school known as 'inclusive learning family school'. It is also referred to as the Centre for Inclusive Education in Kamonyi district where it is located. They receive both students without disabilities and students with different types of disabilities such as intellectual and developmental challenges, physical disabilities, hearing impairments, speech and communication difficulties, multiple disabilities, among others. The school currently has 1,142 students including more than 80 students with various special educational needs. It is a day school, but most students with disabilities live at the

school. Head Teacher Reverend Sister Marie Crésence Uwarurema shares how her school implements inclusive education.

## Responding to the community need

G.S Rosa Mystica was founded by the Congregation of *Soeurs Bernardines*, a Catholic nuns' community.

"We believe that each person is unique and was created in God's image. That's why we started a centre for children with disabilities which we later expanded into G.S Rosa Mystica inclusive school," said Sister Uwarurema.

According to Sister Uwarurema, there were many children with disabilities who were overlooked

by their own families and the community.

"These children were a shameful burden to their families. Instead of being cherished and looked after as every child, some of these children were locked up in their houses and, in most cases, mistreated and exposed to all kinds of violence. For instance, we could receive children such as autistic children who had been tied by their parents and hidden inside their homes. Many parents did not understand that children with disabilities have the same needs and rights as other children," she said.

## Learning from experience

G.S Rosa Mystica started in 2008 as an inclusive secondary school and



most of the learners with disabilities sent to this school had not received proper support according to their disabilities at early age.

“It was not easy to support them. We realised that the best way to effectively support a child with a disability is to start at an early age. We decided to start an inclusive nurse section in 2012, admitting children between the ages of 4 and 6, and started an inclusive primary school a year later,” said Sister Uwarurema.

“At pre-school we observe and analyse children’s attitudes and behaviours to support every child according to his or her needs. One time we heard a child insulting another child in a way that you could not believe it was a child. A teacher who is also a clinical psychologist followed up this case and we later discovered that the child had copied such behaviour from a house helper. We also discovered more issues among other children. For instance, some children were suffering from malnutrition, whereas other children revealed house helpers’ actions which could lead to sexual violence in one way or another.”

“The situation becomes worse if a child has a disability,” she added.

To address those issues, the school management first organised a workshop for the house helpers from the families which had their children in nursery school. “In discussions with the house helpers, we realised that some of them have been affected by family conflicts as they were growing up. How can you expect such a house helper to take care of your child? How can she love your kids if she was not shown love by her own parents,” wondered Sister Uwarurema.

“We also realised that there was negligence among parents as far as monitoring the way their children are treated is concerned,” she added.

Given the findings from this workshop, the school management also convened parents in a separate workshop to make recommendations, and discuss the

way forward based on key issues identified during the discussion with the house helpers. “One of the major outcomes from these workshops was to establish a day-care for children between the ages of 1 and 3 in 2019, which is also inclusive with a special unit for children with autism.”

### Supporting teachers to implement inclusive education

G.S Rosa Mystica works with the University of Rwanda College of Education (UR-CE) to continuously learn about inclusive education. They organise educational visits to the UR-CE, specifically to the School of Inclusive and Special Needs Education. “We also invite a UR-CE trainer to train our teachers on inclusive education. We used to organise such visits twice a year, but the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted our plans. Moreover, Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) appointed an Inclusive and Special Needs Education teacher to our school. This teacher follows up the implementation of inclusive

education and provides support to other teachers whenever necessary,” Sister Uwarurema said.

In addition, Sister Uwarurema is a professional in Inclusive and Special Needs Education—she holds a bachelor’s degree in this field. This means that she also supports teachers in as far as inclusion is concerned. “During the school holidays we organise a 5-day workshop, which I facilitate together with the Inclusive and Special Needs Education teacher. We discuss education issues in general, and address issues related to inclusive education as well.”

### Removing barriers against inclusive education

Sister Uwarurema believes that inclusion requires continuous advocacy and sensitisation. “The mindset of most of our community members has positively changed given the time we have been here as an inclusive school.”

The presence of other partners such as Humanity and Inclusion in Kamonyi district has also contributed to changing people’s mindset with regards to inclusion. However, some challenges still prevail. Sister Uwarurema said: “For instance, some parents still keep their children with disabilities at home and bring them to our school when it is too late. We constantly work with community members and local leaders to raise awareness about inclusive education. At the same time, we encourage parents especially the ones whose children have disabilities to bring them to school so they can achieve their dreams in future like all children.”

So far, village leaders from nine out of 12 sectors in Kamonyi district were trained on advocacy for children with special educational needs. Village leaders identify those children in their community and encourage their parents to bring them to our school. The village leaders are also urge parents and community members to fight discrimination against children with disabilities. “We want to promote inclusive development. This

“We try our best to support children with disabilities whenever we receive them. However, we encourage parents to bring their children as early as possible.”

means that even when children with learning disabilities complete their studies, they are also to be welcomed and supported by their community to be able to prosper and succeed in life."

"We believe that solutions to problems of inclusion can only be found in our community where we live. We do not need money to tell community members that disability is not inability, that disability can come at any time. You may not have a disability now, but you may have one in the future. A family member or a friend may also have a disability in the future. Mobilisation and sensitisation do not necessarily require money. It is a matter of understanding the importance of inclusion."

### Involving parents

Taking care of children with different types of disabilities can be challenging and requires resources. It also requires constant communication and collaboration with parents. At G.S Rosa Mystica, a group of 30 parents volunteered to support in different activities on

a rotating basis, such as cleaning children with disabilities, taking them to the toilet, cleaning classrooms, developing learning and teaching materials, among others.

G.S Rosa Mystica school management elaborated a weekly programme to receive and listen to parents.

"Any parent can come and talk to us every Wednesday and Thursday. This is an opportunity to hear from parents and update them about their children's education. When there are issues, we discuss solutions, and this helps us to move forward as we address issues before it is too late."

### Challenges

When this school started, the main target was to support the surrounding community. However, the school became well-known as an inclusive school, and now receives too many requests from all parts of the country which they cannot satisfy. In addition, the school employs teachers who are not paid by the government, such as those in pre-school, or those who regularly follow up children with severe

disabilities such as children with autism.

"Parents contribute but it is not enough," Sister Uwarurema said.

### Assessing learners' needs

Sister Uwarurema argues that some children do not necessarily need academic performance, rather they need some hands-on experience such as making hand crafts or gardening for example, depending on each one's disability.

The children's needs are identified during the assessment phase (medical assessment) by specialists.

"Some children with disabilities have got special talents. For example, we have a child with a strong memory that allows him to remember everything. This student often helps in addressing disputes among his classmates."

"We try our best to support children with disabilities whenever we receive them. However, we encourage parents to bring their children as early as possible," Sister Uwarurema recommended.







# Inclusion at G.S Amahoro

## An exceptional teacher with visual impairment

In 2019 Mr Uwimana, a teacher with visual impairment at G.S Amahoro was the best teacher at sector level and the second at district level, and was awarded by REB. He managed to excel with limited resources. He did not have a braille machine nor a braille printer.

By Sandrine Ishimwe  
Education Advisor, VVOB

**V**alerie Nzamwitakuze has been the head teacher of G.S Amahoro since 2016. This is a 12 Year Basic Education school in Rubavu district with more than 1800 students. Ms Nzamwitakuze explains how Jean Marie Vianney Uwimana, a teacher with visual impairment, is an exceptional teacher.

“Mr Uwimana teaches Kinyarwanda language from Senior 4 to Senior 6. We had staircases at our school, but we removed them to enable our Kinyarwanda teacher as well as students with disabilities to easily access classrooms.

When I joined this school in 2016, I found Mr Uwimana here. I was worried about him, not because he would not be able to teach but how he would manage big classes. However, the reality is different! He is a very committed and competent teacher and knows how to manage his classes—he is an exceptional teacher.

For instance, when a student disturbs in class he stops teaching and identifies him/her then punishes the student. He can tell the student to stand in the classroom corner for a while, as a punishment. Before students answer to questions in class, they first say their names. So, Mr Uwimana knows every student by name. He checks if every student is in class before he starts teaching. He can randomly call a student to answer to a question when he is teaching. His students are so disciplined and respect him very much. They are so excited about the way he teaches them. His approach increases class participation

and enthusiasm.

When Mr Uwimana is about to come to a given class, students rush to help him carry his teaching materials.

Mr Uwimana also encourages his students to study hard to achieve their dreams in future. In addition, the fact that he is a person with visual impairment who completed university and is a competent and committed teacher, is also an encouragement to students.

Mr Uwimana was the best performing teacher at our school for three consecutive years: 2017 to 2019. The evaluation is done by all teachers who evaluate how students have scored in each subject. In the national exams, Mr Uwimana's students have been excelling in Kinyarwanda language. This is because he follows up and prepares his students from S4 to S6.

In 2019 he was the best teacher at sector level and the second at district level and was awarded a laptop by REB. A special programme for people with visual impairment, called 'JAWS' was installed in this computer so that he can use it.

Mr Uwimana managed to be the best teacher, yet he had limited teaching materials. He did not have a braille machine nor a braille printer. We had been struggling to get teaching materials for him such as special papers so he could 'hardly' prepare some notes.

We advocated for him to the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and received a positive response. We recently received a braille machine as well as a braille printer for him through the Ministry of Local Government. Undoubtedly, students will continue to excel in his lessons, as he now has the necessary equipment.

**Ms Nzamwitakuze also gives a picture of inclusion at her school:**

“We currently have two students with disabilities, one in primary, and the other in secondary education. One has intellectual challenges while the other has physical disabilities. We also have learners with special educational needs such as slow learners both in primary and secondary education. The latter are given extra time to complete the activities such as when taking notes or doing tests.

The learner who is intellectually challenged studies in Senior and has parkinson's disease, a long-term degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that mainly affects the motor system. Due to this disease, the learner can neither write clearly nor fast due to the hand shaking brought on by the disease. We will discuss this with the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA) to establish whether special attention can be paid when marking this student's exam papers.

We usually work with this student's parents by printing the notes to help the student's paced learning, and advised the parents to buy a laptop for this learner once promoted to Senior 4, as we believe that this will be very useful.

# Overcoming barriers to inclusion: teacher's experience

By Etienne Ntawigira  
Communication Advisor, VVOB

**U**wineza Marie Alice has been a teacher at G.S Rosa Mystica for nine years. When she started teaching at this school, there were students with disabilities but no child in Uwineza's class had a disability.

## Overcoming fear of children with disabilities

"I was teaching in secondary and most of the learners with disabilities were still in pre-primary and primary. Some learners had disabilities which I had not seen before. I feared them a lot. I could not imagine having such students in my class. I was always scared when a learner with disability approached me," Ms Uwineza said.

Later, when Ms Uwineza saw how learners with disabilities were supported by those without disabilities, and how they played with them, she felt touched.

"My fear started fading. After one year I saw them as children just like others. Some became my friends and visited me at home to play with my daughter," she said.

## Training on inclusive education

Prior to joining G.S Rosa Mystica as a teacher, Ms Uwineza had not received any training on inclusive education. When learners with disabilities as well as learners with special educational needs started joining secondary education, Ms

Uwineza and her colleagues were trained on inclusive education.

"I realised that most of my colleagues had almost the same feeling as I had. Some of us were even using discriminatory language when referring to a learner with disability."

When Ms Uwineza started receiving learners with disabilities in her class, she noticed that if they get the right support, they learn and succeed just like other children.

"Of course, there are learners with special educational needs who need supplemental supports and follow up," she said.

Every learner is supported

**“Sometimes you face new cases which are totally different from the previous ones. Regular training can help us deal with such challenges.”**

according to his or her needs.

Ms Uwineza said: "We were trained on how to make Individual Education Plans depending on each learner's educational needs. For instance, some learners simply need to learn how to communicate and interact with others. Others need to learn very basic things such as blowing their nose. Some others need to learn practical skills such as making hand crafts, while other learners have multi-disabilities," she said.

## Learners' achievements motivates

Some of our former students especially those with disabilities come back and tell us about their achievements.

"One of my former students once came and told me that 'I helped her so much'. I was so touched. She now makes hand crafts such as necklaces, hats, earrings, gloves for sale during the school holidays. In addition, she also trains young people including her relatives at her village to make hand crafts. I am so proud that my students can acknowledge my contribution to their achievements. It is so encouraging."

## Classroom physical setting

According to Ms Uwineza, they make classroom sitting arrangements based on each learner's needs. For instance, learners with short stature are placed in front, close to the blackboard. Those who are mentally challenged are put in the middle of other learners



to reduce and control their 'disruptive' behaviours.

### Challenges in implementing inclusive classroom

For Ms Uwineza, a period of 40 minutes is not enough to follow up and support every child, since some learners need supplemental supports.

"Sometimes we need an assistant. For instance, an assistant can help during experiments in the science laboratory as you need to support all learners including

those with special educational needs."

To be able to cope with some challenges, Ms Uwineza suggests ongoing and refresher trainings for all teachers.

"We teach learners with different types of disabilities and special educational needs every year. Sometimes you face new cases which are totally different from the previous ones. Regular training can help us deal with such challenges."

### Tips for an inclusive classroom

According to Ms Uwineza, the following tips are key for effective inclusion:

- Train all teachers on inclusive education
- Promote and encourage non-discriminatory language, attitudes, practices in class
- Talk to parents regularly
- Support and encourage children with disabilities—never discourage them
- Build a personal connection with your students

# Promoting inclusive practices: Interview with Deputy Head Teacher Musanabera

By Julius Sebuhalala  
Education Advisor, VVOB

**M**usanabera Antoinette has been the deputy head teacher of G.S Rukara Catholique in Kayonza district since 2016. She gives an inclusion picture at her school, in an interview with Julius Sebuhalala, Education Advisor at VVOB.

## Could you describe inclusive education in your school?

Our school is a 12-Year Basic Education school that has close to 1,300 students. We have 17 learners (13 boys and 4 girls) with mental challenges and physical disabilities. We also have three teachers with physical disabilities. Students with disabilities study with their colleagues in the same classrooms and teachers try their best to support all students to ensure no one is left behind. We work with parents, the community, and local leaders to ensure learners with disabilities are brought to school and learn.

## As a school leader, how do you support your teachers in implementing inclusive education?

We support teachers to get teaching aids so that students with special educational needs as well as other students can learn easily. We also organise trainings at school to make sure teachers know how to handle and support students with disabilities. In addition, teachers meet once every week and share experiences and discuss solutions to identified challenges. They also discuss approaches to support learners with disabilities among other issues.

## What challenges do you face in implementing inclusive education in your school and how do you address them?

We do not have enough equipment and facilities. Specifically, we face the following challenges:

- Standard ramps for students with physical disabilities are not enough

“We strongly condemn stereotypes against learners with disabilities. No student is allowed to bully fellow students.”

- Some students with physical disabilities do not have wheelchairs
- Lack of walking sticks for students with visual impairment
- We do not have accessible toilets for students with disabilities

We received some support from development partners to address some of these challenges. For example, World Vision International supported us to construct ramps. However, we still have insufficient facilities for learners with disabilities.

Meanwhile, we have been advocating for our students with disabilities to district officials to support us with some materials

such books, braille machines, wheelchairs, walking sticks etc. We hope they will help us to address these challenges.

## What are the prevailing stereotypes against students with disabilities and how do you deal with them?

We strongly condemn stereotypes against learners with disabilities. No student is allowed to bully fellow students. However, in the community there are still beliefs that students with disabilities cannot study and graduate. Such thinking is changing, and we hope it will keep changing. We always encourage parents to bring their children to school regardless of their disabilities.

## What is your request to REB regarding inclusion?

Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) should initiate a continuous training programme on Inclusion and Special Needs Education for school leaders and in-service teachers. This would enhance the capacity of teachers to be able to effectively support students with special educational needs. REB should also provide equipment and facilities to make the implementation of inclusive education more effective. They can provide 'special' teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities, continue to support construction of facilities such as accessible toilets, standard ramps, among others.





# Dealing with discriminatory behaviour and practices through Inclusive Education club

By Etienne Ntawigira  
Communication Advisor, VVOB

Jean Claude Hanganimana has been a teacher for 10 years. He currently teaches social studies at G.S Rukara Catholique where he also coordinates inclusion activities including the students inclusive education club.



I joined teaching profession in 2011 and received some training in inclusive and special needs education three years later. Before I got trained there was stigma against learners with disabilities at our school. We could receive children with disabilities, but we did not know that some of them needed special education. Us teachers, as well as students were using discriminatory language against learners with disabilities. For instance, during the breaks some students would surround their peers with disabilities during break and make fun of them because of their disabilities. Some learners were referred to by their disabilities rather than their names. We had learners with intellectual challenges, but no one knew how to handle them. These learners were at an increased risk of being bullied compared to learners with other types of disabilities. Some learners dropped out due to stigma and bullying.

After the training I realised that learners with disabilities want respect and acceptance. I organised a training for colleagues to have a common understanding about inclusion. With the support of the school management, I also initiated an Inclusive Education club for students. We started by identifying barriers to inclusive education and how we could address them. The major challenge was stigma and bullying against children with disabilities. We started to promote respectful and non-discriminatory language with regards to learners with special educational needs.

Before COVID-19 pandemic we



"We managed to bring back learners with disabilities who had dropped out... We also convinced a parent whose 10-year-old son with a physical disability had never gone to school. He now enjoys being in school."

conducted inclusive education sensitization campaigns through drama, poems, songs. The messages and language we promote include: disability is not inability, all learners are equal, all learners have right to education without any form of discrimination.

Through inclusion club, we ask students to identify children with disabilities in their community. Once those children are identified we organise visits to their homes and talk to their

parents about the importance of sending their children to school. During our conversation with parents, we insist on the fact that children with disabilities are children like others and have the right to education too. We use examples of some learners with disabilities who get the same score or even above their peers to convince parents. We managed to convince the parents we visited to send their children to school.

## Successes

We managed to reduce stigma against learners with disabilities. Students have understood that their peers with disabilities are learners like them. Learners with disabilities are not bullied nor stigmatized anymore, thanks to the club.

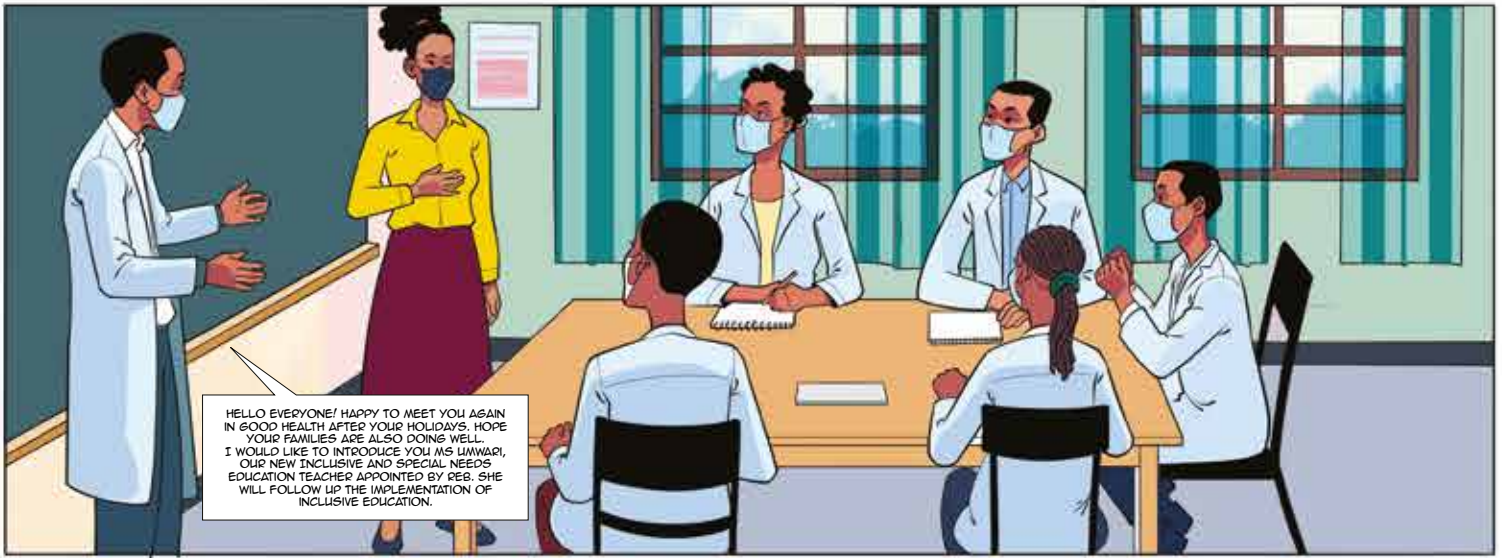
We managed to bring back learners with disabilities who had dropped out as the learning environment was not friendly. In 2019 we convinced a parent whose 10-year-old son had a physical disability and had never gone to school. He is now in Primary 2 and enjoys being at school.

When we receive a learner with special educational needs, we support them according to each one's needs. If necessary we discuss with their parents depending on the learners' needs.

## Outstanding challenges

We want to display key inclusion messages on posters but our school does not have a budget for it. The messages can include non-discriminatory language to be used when referring to a certain disability to avoid discrimination and stigma against students with disabilities. We also think that it is a good idea to display signs that indicate different facilities for learners with disabilities, such as ramps, accessible toilets, among others. Displaying a big sign language alphabet and numbers poster could also help both students and teachers to learn basics about communicating with learners with hearing impairment."

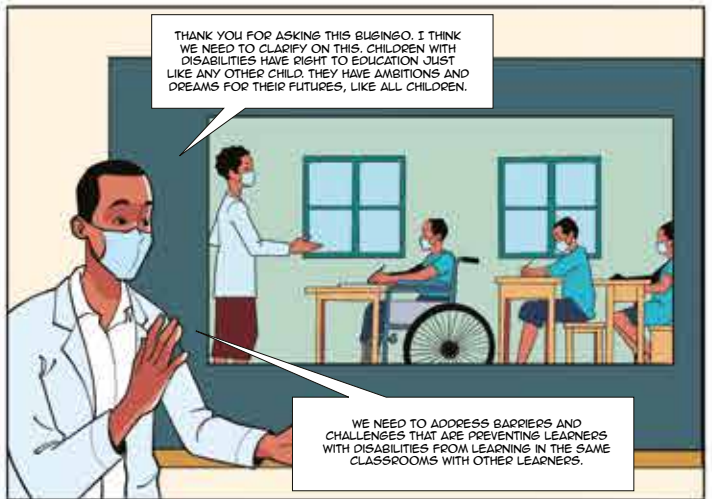
THE SCHOOL YEAR IS ABOUT TO START. KWITONDA (HEAD TEACHER) FACILITATES A GENERAL STAFF MEETING. THE FIRST ITEM ON THE MEETING AGENDA IS TO INTRODUCE UMWARI, A NEW INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION TEACHER APPOINTED BY REB TO THEIR SCHOOL.



HELLO EVERYONE! HAPPY TO MEET YOU AGAIN IN GOOD HEALTH AFTER YOUR HOLIDAYS. HOPE YOUR FAMILIES ARE ALSO DOING WELL. I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU MS UMWARI, OUR NEW INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION TEACHER APPOINTED BY REB. SHE WILL FOLLOW UP THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

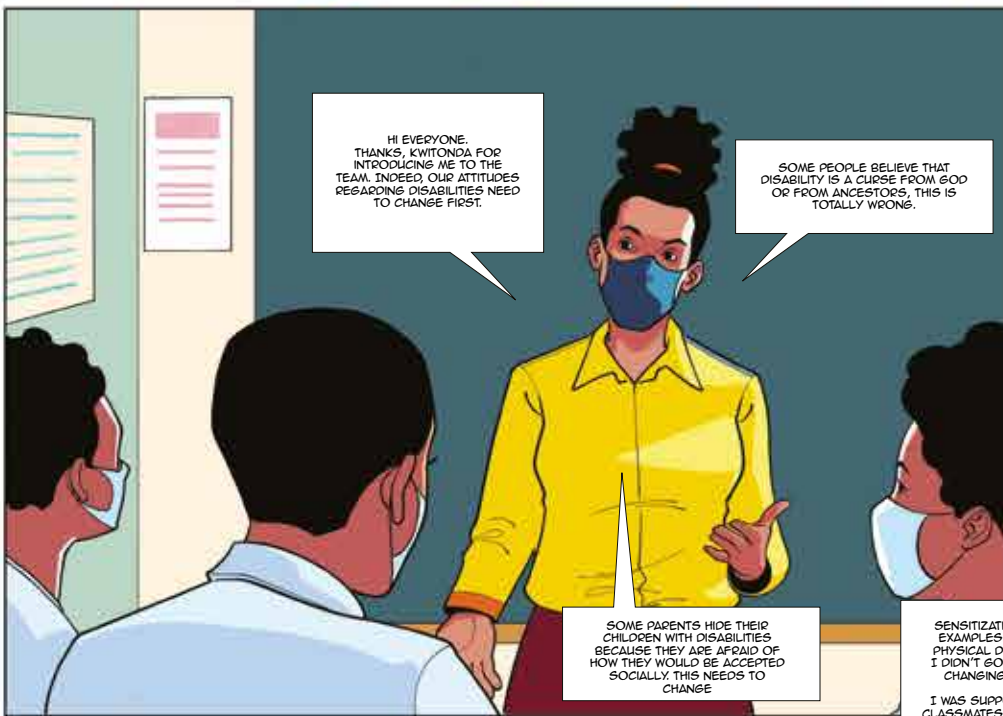


THANKS, KWITONDA. DO YOU MEAN OUR SCHOOL IS GOING TO BECOME A SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES? I THINK INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS.



THANK YOU FOR ASKING THIS BUNGO. I THINK WE NEED TO CLARIFY ON THIS. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES HAVE RIGHT TO EDUCATION JUST LIKE ANY OTHER CHILD. THEY HAVE AMBITIONS AND DREAMS FOR THEIR FUTURES, LIKE ALL CHILDREN.

WE NEED TO ADDRESS BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES THAT ARE PREVENTING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES FROM LEARNING IN THE SAME CLASSROOMS WITH OTHER LEARNERS.



HI EVERYONE. THANKS, KWITONDA FOR INTRODUCING ME TO THE TEAM. INDEED, OUR ATTITUDES REGARDING DISABILITIES NEED TO CHANGE FIRST.

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT DISABILITY IS A CURSE FROM GOD OR FROM ANCESTORS. THIS IS TOTALLY WRONG.

SOME PARENTS HIDE THEIR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID OF HOW THEY WOULD BE ACCEPTED SOCIALLY. THIS NEEDS TO CHANGE



SENSITIZATION IS KEY. I THINK WE CAN USE REAL EXAMPLES. DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY. I HAVE PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND DO MY JOB LIKE YOU. I DIDN'T GO TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL. IT IS ABOUT CHANGING PARENTS, COMMUNITY, TEACHERS' ATTITUDES. I WAS SUPPORTED AS I WAS GROWING UP BY MY CLASSMATES, MY TEACHERS...WE CAN ALSO DO THE SAME HERE.



I UNDERSTAND NOW, WE CAN ALSO BE AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, BUT I THINK WE'RE NOT YET PREPARED.



NO, WE DO NOT NEED SPECIAL PREPARATIONS. WE CAN ADAPT OUR SCHOOL STEP BY STEP. FOR INSTANCE, WE CAN ADJUST OUR BLACK BOARDS, HAND WASHING FACILITIES, BUILD ACCESSIBLE TOILETS, BUILD RAMPS FOR WHEELCHAIRS...TO MAKE THEM ACCESSIBLE FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES. WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT EVERYTHING WILL BE POSSIBLE.



THAT'S CLEAR UNWARI, WE CAN HAVE AN ENABLING AND FRIENDLY PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES. BUT HOW ABOUT TEACHING THOSE CHILDREN? FOR INSTANCE, NO ONE HERE CAN TEACH A CHILD WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT.



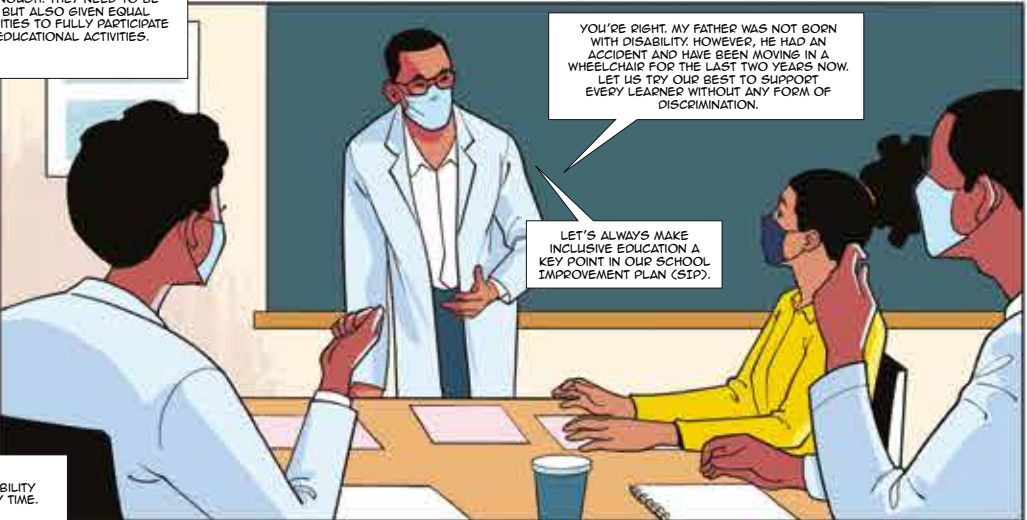
THAT IS WHY RES SENT ME HERE. I WILL TRAIN YOU ON SOME BASICS ABOUT HELPING AND TEACHING SOME CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES. I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO ASSESS EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES. IN ADDITION, I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO PREPARE AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) FOR THOSE LEARNERS. WE CAN ALSO LEARN FROM OTHER SCHOOLS THAT ARE ADVANCED IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IF NECESSARY.



REMEMBER, HAVING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS IN REGULAR CLASSROOM IS NOT ENOUGH. THEY NEED TO BE TAUGHT BUT ALSO GIVEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN ALL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.



REMEMBER, DISABILITY CAN COME AT ANY TIME.



YOU'RE RIGHT, MY FATHER WAS NOT BORN WITH DISABILITY. HOWEVER, HE HAD AN ACCIDENT AND HAVE BEEN MOVING IN A WHEELCHAIR FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS NOW. LET US TRY OUR BEST TO SUPPORT EVERY LEARNER WITHOUT ANY FORM OF DISCRIMINATION.

LET'S ALWAYS MAKE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION A KEY POINT IN OUR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP).

# Interview with parents

Tharcisse Ntiyamira lives in Rukara sector, Kayonza district, Eastern province. His 11-year-old son fell and broke his right leg when he was 5 years old and cannot walk properly since then. Mr Ntiyamira had not sent his son to school until he was 10 years old. However, Mr Ntiyamira's other children were going to school. He was scared to send his son to school and wanted to protect him at home. Later on, he changed his mind and sent him to G.S Rukara Catholique located 1.5 km from his home.

By SJulius Sebuhalala  
Education Advisor, VVOB

“My son studies in primary 2 and every time I visit him at school and find him playing with other students I feel so excited. I could not imagine seeing him playing with other children anymore.”

I thought sending a child with disability to school could be a waste of time. He cannot walk properly until now. When my son broke his leg I felt he should not be given any task to do. Later, I realized that this was a kind of stigma against him. He can do what he can instead of considering him as a 'disabled' who cannot do or achieve anything, or simply thinking and deciding everything for him. We sometimes stigmatise our own children without knowing it.

I now feel so happy to see my son in school. He studies in primary 2 and



Mr Ntiyamira's 11 year-old son shows him what he learned at school



every time I visit him at school and find him playing with other children I feel so excited. I could not imagine seeing him playing with other children after breaking his leg. I am also happy.

## Why do some parents hesitate to send their children with disabilities to school?

Stereotypes and myths against people with disabilities still prevail in our community. Some parents believe that children with disabilities cannot achieve anything in their life, just like I used to think when my child broke his leg. Others think that sending such children to school is burdening their kids who are already 'living a difficult life due to their disabilities'. In addition, there are still beliefs that people with disabilities have been cursed, while others believe that people with disabilities are possessed.

To challenge those stereotypes, we as parents, try to talk to each other whenever an opportunity arises, such as during meetings at our village. I encourage parents to send their children to school by giving an example of my own child who has disabilities and goes to school with other children. Based on my child's case, I also challenge other parents that disabilities can come any time. For example, my son did not have a disability until he broke his leg. I now know that children with disabilities have dreams for the future like all children. Those children can achieve their dream if they are supported.

I think that good practices by those who have already changed their minds with regard to children with disabilities will challenge prevailing stereotypes in our community.





Dina Mukashema lives in Rubavu district. Her son studies in senior 3 at G.S Amahoro in Rubavu district, and has parkinson's disease, a long-term degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that mainly affects the motor system. Due to this disease, he cannot write very well nor very fast as he is always shaking. Ms Mukashema shares how her son gets supported at school.

By Sandrine Ishimwe  
Education Advisor, VVOB

### How was your child affected when schools were closed due to COVID-19?

Given my son's learning disability, he cannot learn in the absence of a teacher. So, it was not possible for him to follow lessons on radio when schools were closed.

### How has he been supported after school reopened?

Teachers try to support him so he can be on the same level as his classmates. The school management does their best to support my child in different ways according to his educational needs. For instance, while other students take lunch at school, they allowed my son to take it from home. During exams or tests, teachers give him extra time so he can finish the questions. After class, my child tries to revise the lessons. However, it is a challenge for us, parents to help him because we do not speak English.

### What are the challenges is he facing related to COVID-19?

There are no specific challenges. He wears a face mask, washes his hands like other students. He knows very well that he has to observe COVID-19 prevention measures.

### How is your son treated by his peers at school? Does he face stigma or isolation?

My son doesn't face stigma at the school. His colleagues support him whenever necessary, and I am happy for this. I think isolating a child just because they have a certain disability would affect them. These children need to be shown love and get supported whenever



“I would like to kindly ask Rwanda Basic Education Board examiners to read carefully my son's exam papers in the national examination as his handwriting is not very readable due to his disability.”

necessary.

What I can advise other schools is that the school should work with teachers and parents to support learners with disabilities so they can learn like their peers without disabilities. This creates confidence and self-esteem in the child and feel motivated to go to school and perform well in class.

### What are your wishes regarding inclusion?

What I can ask the community is not to isolate children with disabilities as they are able to do anything like their peers without disability if supported and given the opportunity.

I would like to kindly request Rwanda Basic Education Board examiners to read carefully my son's exam papers in the national exam as his handwriting is not very readable due to his disability. I would also like to ask REB to provide necessary facilities and equipment to all students with special educational needs, depending on student's needs.

# “We try our best to ensure students with disabilities learn in the same conditions as other students,” Head Teacher Sebahire



By Innocent Hagenimana  
Public Relations Officer, REB

**A**n American judge Geary Oberti once said: “Inclusion is the right not a privilege for a select few.”

According to UNICEF, inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools.

This means that children with disabilities deserve better education too.

Deogratias Sebahire, head teacher at G.S Nyinawimana school in Gicumbi district believes that inclusive education means welcoming every child without any form of discrimination.

“We currently have more than 2,500 students both in primary and secondary education. This number includes 57 students who have disabilities and we try our best

to make sure they all learn in the same conditions,” Mr Sebahire said.

Students with different disabilities need specific infrastructure such as barrier-free facilities, standard ramps, a comfortable classroom, adapted toilets, landmarks and clear walkways among others. “We try our best to support children with disabilities and we are happy that learners with disabilities are doing well despite some challenges,” He said.

According to Mr Sebahire, ramps are not enough. Classroom blackboards cannot be accessed by every student with disabilities. The school also does not have enough accessible toilets.

However, the school collaborates with different stakeholders, so Mr Sebahire believes that those issues will be addressed in the future.

The school has an exercise room where some students with disabilities can practice muscle-strengthening exercises necessary for them.

## Parent teacher collaboration

G.S Nyinawimana formed a committee of five teachers that works in close collaboration with teachers to identify learning needs, especially among students with disabilities.

## REB’s support

G.S Nyinawimana appreciates the support provided by Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) to ensure effective implementation of inclusive education. REB appointed a university graduate from the School of Inclusive and Special Needs Education at the University of Rwanda College of Education (UR-CE), to oversee and coordinate the implementation of inclusive education.

This teacher trains and coaches other teachers on how to support learners with different types of disabilities, and learners with special educational needs. She also



helps to assess educational needs among learners with disabilities and learners with special educational needs, and facilitates fellow teachers to prepare individual education plan (IEP) for those learners.

"We are very happy that REB sent us this teacher. I think that having one more teacher who is a specialist in inclusion would be much better."

Mr. Sebahire also thinks that there is need for a curriculum for 'slow learners'.

"Having a special curriculum or Individual Education Programme (IEP) which allows students to learn on their own pace instead of using a standard curriculum would also help," he said.

Mr. Sebahire also appreciates different partners such as VVOB for offering professional development training to school leaders and teachers. According to him, the training offered by VVOB discussed inclusive education among other themes. "We are lucky to have had those trainings. They reminded us the importance of inclusion," Mr Sebahire said.

### Teachers' love for students

Teachers' compassionate love for learners is the pillar for the success of learners. Valentine Urengejeho, a special needs and inclusive education teacher appointed by REB to G.S Nyinawimana says that nothing will stop her love of students, especially the ones with disabilities and special educational needs. "We have a heart of helping students with disabilities and we believe that every

“We have a heart of helping students with disabilities and we believe that every child has a dream and deserves a better life.”

child has a dream and deserves a better life. Our purpose is to help them shape their future and achieve their dreams," she said.

Teachers try to use locally available resources and have a resource room for students with disabilities. Other students can also use the resource room when necessary. This resource room can accommodate at least five students and teachers use it to support students with disabilities one by one where they can learn with minimal distraction.

### Involving parents

According to Global Partnership for Education (GPE), when parents are involved in their children's education, children are more engaged with their schoolwork, stay in school longer, and achieve better learning outcomes. GPE supports partner countries in building stronger and more resilient education systems to ensure that children get a quality education.

Jean Damascene Nsanzineza, a parent whose child studies at G.S Nyinawimana believes that parents and community involvement is imperative to achieve inclusive education. "Students with disabilities are human beings just like others. These children were not cursed. Their parents should send them to school, follow up their education to help them realise their dreams," he said.

### Students' dreams

Lenatha Niyogushima studies in primary 1 at G.S Nyinawimana. She has a physical disability and her dream is to become a teacher. "I am happy with my classmates, I am comfortable with this wheelchair. I want to become a teacher," she said. Yvone Murakatete, also a student in primary 1, is a friend to Niyogushima. "I do not study in the same class with Niyogushima but when it is time for break, I get out, pick her and drive her wheelchair happily. I also want to be a teacher when I grow up," Murekatete said.



# Promoting STEM education for



School leaders play a key role in promoting girls' education and motivating them to choose STEM subjects. Strengthening and promoting STEM subjects is a top priority for the government of Rwanda (Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2018/19 to 2023/24). The government's aspiration to become a knowledge-based economy requires the development of scientific and technological skills across all levels of society, with a special focus on girls.

By Etienne Ntawigira & Chantal Dusabe Kabanda, VVOB

This story was first published in the [Educational Leader Africa Magazine \(bit.ly/3sf4W6l\)](https://www.educationleader.com/3sf4W6l), June 2021, on pages 15-17.

**R**everend Sister Marie Pelagie Umumararungu has been leading G.S Mater Dei, a secondary school located in Nyanza district, Southern province, for 12 years. This school was a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) school until 2007. It later became a general secondary school with science options, and Sister Umumararungu joined when it

“...I want to challenge such baseless beliefs that only boys can do well in science”.

became a science school. She noticed that girls were still fearing science subjects at that time: science was “too difficult” and “meant for boys”. Sister Umumararungu was already committed to promoting girls' education, and her participation in VVOB - education for development's continuous professional development (CPD) training programme in Effective School Leadership boosted her dedication.

### Motivating students to love science

Since she became a leader of G.S Mater Dei, Sister Umumararungu has been organising sessions with girls



# girls: the role of school leaders

to explain the benefits of studying science, stressing the fact that “science is for everyone”. The school currently has 724 students in total, including 461 students in science subjects, 230 girls and 231 boys. She says: “I encourage girls that they can perform well in science if they are committed to it. I always tell them that science education is not meant for a specific gender. I want to challenge such baseless beliefs that only boys can do well in science subjects.”

Additionally, Sister Umumarungu explains to students the application of science in real life, by showing them how scientific knowledge can help to solve practical problems. “You can create and discover, you can become a pilot if you study mathematics and physics, you can become a medical doctor...” Sister Umumarungu tells the students.

Sister Umumarungu is so excited that one of the female students from her school became a pilot. “It is so motivating to realise that your advice and encouragement has inspired someone to achieve their dreams,” she said.

## Inspiring training programme

When Sister Umumarungu attended VVOB’s CPD training course in Effective School Leadership, she understood the relevance of promoting girls’ education in a clearer and broader way. “I thought I knew it well as I was doing it. However, I realised that I needed more insights. I was already promoting girls’ education in a particular way, by encouraging them to choose science subjects and trying to make sure they do not lag behind, but I was doing it with some hesitation and would feel that I was being too “pushy”. After participating in a training offered by VVOB, I realised that encouraging girls and including them in STEM is the right thing to do. I learnt that challenging the biases and stereotypes that prevent women and girls from pursuing science careers should be



everyone’s responsibility.”

VVOB has been implementing a five-year programme, Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LTLT) in primary and secondary schools since 2017, in partnership with the University of Rwanda – College of Education and Rwanda Basic Education Board. Through this programme, VVOB and its partners have been delivering certificate and diploma courses for system and school-based leaders and provide opportunities for school leaders to encourage one another in supportive professional learning communities. A diploma course in Effective School Leadership equips head teachers and deputy head teachers with the competences to fulfil their roles as school leaders. A certificate course in Educational Mentorship and Coaching is offered to school based mentors and school subject leaders in STEM, to equip them with effective tools and skills to facilitate professional development activities in schools. At the same time, District Education Directors and Officers, and Sector Education Inspectors receive the same certificate course which equips them with the competences to coach school leaders

effectively, and to initiate and sustain professional learning communities of school leaders.

In secondary education, these programmes are part of the Mastercard Foundation’s Leaders in Teaching initiative. Leaders in Teaching is an initiative that transforms teaching and learning in secondary education across Africa so young people have the skills and competencies they need to succeed in work and life.

## Contribution of female school alumnae

Learning about female students who studied at G.S Mater Dei and have become successful in life like the pilot, motivates other students, and makes them dream big. That’s why some former students are invited to come back to their school and talk to students.

Sister Umumarungu: “When a former student asks me to come here to talk to students, I welcome them happily! For instance, a group of former students visited our school and shared testimonies about their education journey and achievements with our

students. In addition, they donated science books to support their 'younger brothers and sisters', especially girls already in science options, as well as those in lower secondary aspiring to study science subjects in future. We managed to establish a small and 'special' library with those books."

### Encouraging best performing girls

Sister Umumararungu organises events to recognise the best performing students, especially girls, and reward them publicly—an opportunity to encourage and motivate other girls to choose science subjects. For instance, in 2017 the best performing student in national secondary school leaving examinations in mathematics and physics subjects was a girl from our school. In 2019, the top student in the end-of-year examinations at this school was a girl. In addition, one of the best female students from this school was selected by the Ministry of Education

through Rwanda Basic Education Board to attend a one-month science training in the United States along with other science students from different schools. Sister Umumararungu appreciated those students before their colleagues. She believes this motivates other girls as well as boys to work hard.

At the same time, when girls have not performed well in exams, Sister Umumararungu also organises sessions to talk to them to find out what made them perform poorly and discuss solutions together.

### Dealing with fear of science subjects

Science competitions are usually organised at district, provincial and national levels on a regular basis. "I know some head teachers prioritise boys, but I make sure girls are not left behind," Sister Umumararungu noted. She realised that some girls fear such kind of competitions thinking that they cannot compete with boys. So, she

encourages them to participate in these competitions in order "to build their self-esteem and confidence".

Sister Umumararungu also supports science teachers to organise and facilitate debates on science topics among students. According to her, this allows students to increase scientific knowledge and uplift their confidence as well. Students are also grouped in science clubs in which they are encouraged to conduct science experiments and learn from each other. "We want to stimulate their interest and motivation in science. We noticed that most students have curiosity to discover".

In addition, the school organises science experiments such as making soaps, during School General Assembly events. On such occasions, Sister Umumararungu also encourages girls to participate not only to reinforce their confidence, but also to allow parents to have an idea of what their children have learnt.





# Strengthening Instructional Leadership: A Collaborative Effort

By Ilse Flink & Chantal Dusabe Kabanda, VVOB

Since 2016, VVOB – education for development has been working with Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) and the University of Rwanda – College of Education (UR-CE) to capacitate school leaders as instructional leaders. Through two complementary continuous professional development (CPD) modalities – a one-year blended training diploma programme and participation in professional learning communities facilitated by Sector Education Inspectors – school leaders are taken through the key building blocks of effective school leadership whilst also developing cross-cutting skills like gender-responsiveness, inclusive education, Monitoring and Evaluation and Information and Communication Technology.

So far, about 1,400 school leaders have been trained in 17 out of 30 districts. A recent external evaluation shows that the impact on the daily practices of school leaders is very promising. The CPD modalities are expected to scale up to the remaining districts so that all school leaders in Rwanda have what it takes to be effective instructional leaders.

## Changes in leadership beliefs and practices

In Rwanda, school leadership is traditionally top-down, with teachers accountable to headteachers who are, in turn, accountable to their hierarchical superiors at the district level. Changing this mindset and introducing shared leadership is an important element of REB's vision of competent headteachers. After taking part in the training program, school leaders have a better understanding of the value of shared leadership, and they change their perceptions towards it. Importantly, these changed beliefs



School leaders in a CPD training session in Rusizi district.

translate into changes in practice. Some school leaders make time in the school timetable so that school-based mentors can set up communities of practice of subject teachers and organise formal induction programmes for new teachers. Others create platforms for shared decision-making such as School Improvement Planning teams. As a result of this evolution towards shared school leadership practices, teachers, in turn, indicate having more decision-making power when it comes to school improvement planning and more autonomy in lesson planning and assessments. Teachers feel more valued and motivated and can approach their school leaders without fear of rejection or reprisal.

"I used to think that I am the centre of everything in the school, but after studying about sharing responsibilities, I learned that everyone is responsible for every activity in school. If something is not right, everyone in school has the right to comment about it or come to me and say 'this is wrong, let us change it'... I have become more friendly with the teachers due to this collaboration

and working together." Headteacher, Rwandan Secondary School.

"There are leaders who thought that evaluating a teacher means focusing on what they do wrong, and punishing them. But, after the training, they have understood that evaluating a teacher means to advise and guide, not to threaten." School-based Mentor, Rwandan Secondary School.

The detailed version of this article was first published on World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) website (<https://bit.ly/3i7JQ73>).

Download the midline evaluation of the 'Leading, Teaching and Learning Together in Secondary Education in Rwanda' for free from this link: <https://bit.ly/3rgqY8O> or scan the QR code below to download the report.



# TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The tips and tricks listed below were shared by head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers from the schools visited for this edition of Urunana rw'abarezi, based on their experiences. You can also send your tips for effective inclusion practices to [info.rwanda@vvob.org](mailto:info.rwanda@vvob.org).

## To school leaders



- Be exemplary in supporting children with disabilities
- Assign a teacher(s) to follow up the implementation of inclusive education
- Organise training for your teachers on Inclusive and Special Needs Education
- Organise educational visits to other schools to learn from them
- Maintain regular communication with parents
- Make your school a safe and supportive environment for all learners
- Work with local leaders and the school community to get all children in school
- Advocate for your teachers/learners with disabilities if necessary
- Organise awareness meetings with students and teachers about inclusion
- Display posters/banners with key inclusion messages at different locations

## To teachers

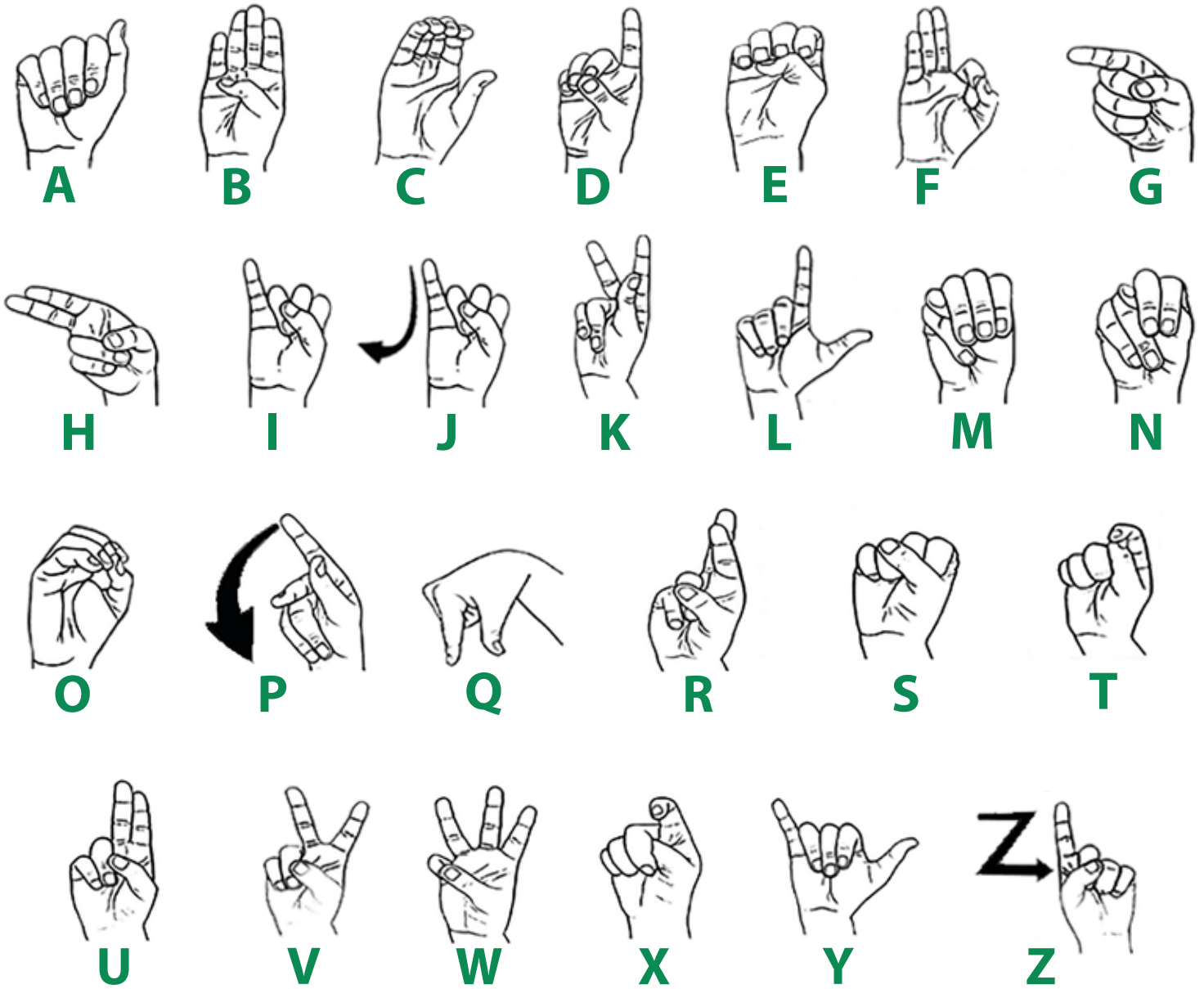


- Build a personal connection with your students-it increases participation
- Discuss with parents about their children's progress and needs
- Promote non-discriminatory language, attitudes and practices in class
- Promote and encourage best practices
- Condemn/punish discriminatory behaviours, attitudes, practices such as bullying
- Focus on abilities not disabilities
- Make Individual Education Plan according to each learner's needs
- Create a friendly and supportive learning environment for your students
- Develop a behaviour management plan
- Use positive reinforcement to motivate learners with disabilities

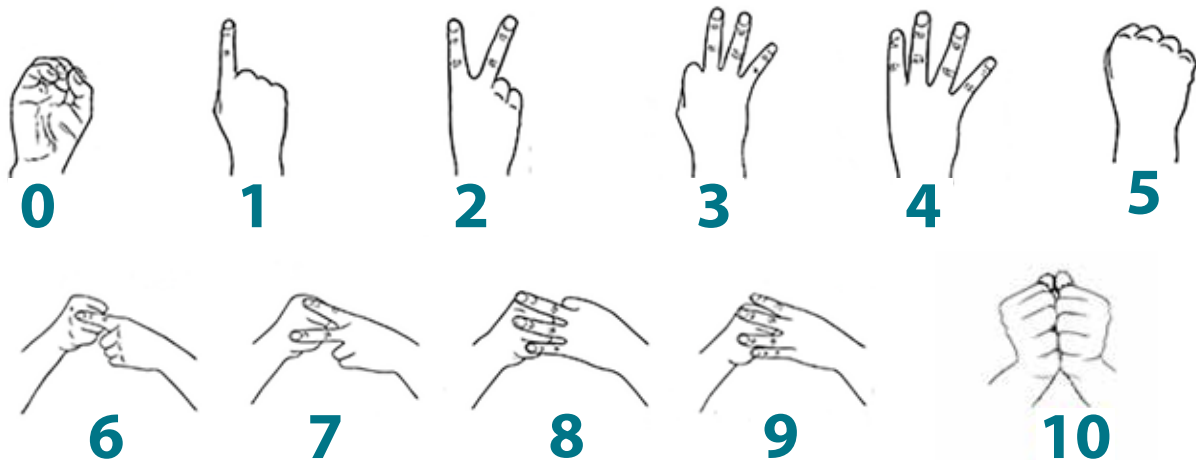




## RWANDA FINGERSPELLING ALPHABET



## RWANDA SIGN LANGUAGE NUMBERS



Source: Source: Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD)





veigelle ou par un <math>e-h</math> muet.

Exemples:

pronoms personnels	pronoms personnels devant une veigelle ou un <math>e-h</math> muet
nouveau	nouvel
vieux	vieil
beau	bel
fat	fol
	mal

Féminin

KIN	ENG	PHI	ART
B	RE	E	A
HIST	CHEM	GEO	EN
ENG	CHEM	MATH	EN
PHI	ENT	PHY	KI
ART	U	ART	U
FRA	ENG	MATH	U
GEO	MATH	FAR	U
PHY	BIO	SP	U
ENT	U	U	U

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[www.reb.gov.rw](http://www.reb.gov.rw)

REB: P.O. Box 3817 Kigali, Rwanda

 @REBRwanda

 @RwandaEducationBoardOfficial

[rwanda.vvob.org](http://rwanda.vvob.org) | E: [info.rwanda@vvob.org](mailto:info.rwanda@vvob.org)

KG 565 st, House No 6, Kacyiru, P.O. Box 3776, Kigali-Rwanda

 +250 785 702 442  @VVOBrwanda  VVOBrwanda  VVOB Rwanda

