



RWANDA  
EDUCATION  
FOR ALL COALITION

# **Report on the implementation of government established school-based initiatives**

REFAC

## **Abbreviations**

CBE:	Curriculum Based Establishment
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
EFA:	Education for All
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
FPE:	Free Primary Education
GER:	Gross Enrollment Rate
NER:	Net Enrollment Rate
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
RwandaEQUIP:	Rwanda Education Quality Improvement Program
SDMS:	School Data Management System
SFP:	School Feeding Program
IMS:	Inclusive Model Schools
ESPIG:	Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
BFP:	National Education Budgeting

## **1. Background information.**

REFAC and its members are at the forefront of engaging Government institutions and development partners on the implementation of policies and guidelines that facilitate increased access to gender equality, inclusive and quality education for girls, women, and vulnerable and marginalised persons. REFAC leverages the existing influencing forums and the capacity (knowledge, skills and other means) of its members and stakeholders to engage in education policy influencing toward the promotion of inclusive and gender responsive education.

To attain the goals of Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Rwanda, REFAC in collaboration with other partners in the education sector has regularly engaged the Ministry of Education to ensure improvement in basic education through monitoring the implementation of the established education policies, programs, strategies and guidelines. The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) is currently implementing several strategies and programs including the Education Sector Program Implementation Grant, RwandaEQUIP, school feeding, school data management system (SDMS) and inclusive model schools to support inclusive, equitable and quality education in Rwanda, which offers opportunities for REFAC and partners to engage and influence the processes, particularly to advocate for gender and inclusion in education.

Rwanda Education for All (REFAC) reviewed relevant government established school-based initiatives at the district level, during this exercise, district authorities and stakeholders were consulted to ensure their contribution, understanding, whether effectively integrated into the district development, positive effects, faced challenges and the level of the implementation to these school-based initiatives. The review focused mainly on the consideration of gender and inclusion in education to see how actively civic engagement at both the district and national levels in Rwanda as gender disparities and barriers to inclusion persist in the education system in addressing these challenges that necessitate collective action and advocacy. At the district level, all education stakeholders were interviewed to know their involvement in these government established school-based initiatives implementation to promote gender-responsive and inclusive education policies and ensure equitable access to education for all.

Therefore, REFAC conducted a review exercise to monitor the implementation of strategies and programs including the Education Sector Program Implementation Grant, RwandaEQUIP, school feeding, school data management system (SDMS) and inclusive model schools, to support inclusive to understand the extent to which educational indicators have been achieved and to develop/formulate more comprehensive

recommendations to inform the future effective implementation of the school-based initiatives.

The report demonstrates the level of the implementation effectiveness, positive effects, barriers and recommendations of the school based initiatives:

### **I. Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG)**

As part of the conducted review, REFAC monitored the Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG); the Education Sector received USD30.8 million to support the implementation of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2018-2024). Thirty percent (US\$ 9.4 million) of the total Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) allocation was committed to the variable part of the programme, which is based on the achievement of specific results. As a result, the disbursement of the variable part is linked to the achievement of agreed indicators which target the following three areas, also called *Disbursement Linked Indicator* (DLI): (i) learning outcomes (DLI 1); (ii) equity (DLI 2); and (iii) efficiency (DLI 3).

As per the 2022 annual report, The Ministry of Education has achieved equity (DLI 2) related targets:

1. 3000 primary and secondary teachers trained in Inclusive Education by 2022/23
2. Increased enrollment of learners with special education needs and disabilities from 17,133 to 18,508 in Primary education by 2023/24

Furthermore, on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020, the Ministry of Education issued Ministerial Instructions No 001/ MINEDUC/ 2020, Regulating the promotion, repetition, dismissal and transfer of students. The purpose of the Ministerial instructions was to determine modalities for helping learners learn and perform better in examinations and assessments. These instructions were to be implemented by all schools in Rwanda to reduce dropout and repetition rates in schools.

The GPE operating model requires that the evaluation of achieved targets be conducted by a third party and that the report be produced and submitted.

It is from this background that the Rwanda Education for All Coalition (REFAC) conducted the review of the implementation of attainment of learning outcomes, equity and efficiency targets.

The purpose was to verify the attainment of equity and efficiency targets with the purpose of producing a comprehensive report on the extent to which the targets have been met.

## **1. Objectives**

The review process of attainment of equity and efficiency targets had the following objectives:

- To ascertain the extent to which teachers training on inclusive education has had an impact on teaching/ learning for all children.
- To examine the enrollment rate of learners with disabilities and special educational needs in primary schools and how they are supported within inclusive and special schools.
- To review the implementation status of the ministerial instructions regulating the promotion, repetition, dismissal and transfer of learners.

### **The review of achieved Targets.**

The review analysed whether the equity and efficiency targets have been achieved, a sample of 5 schools in five districts was randomly selected and specific questions were administered to Teachers and Headteachers. Specifically;

Five Head Teachers for both primary and secondary schools were interviewed to examine the extent to which the number of students with disabilities enrolled in schools has been increasing over time and to assess the support provided to teachers and students; challenges in the education of students with disabilities. In addition, strategies adopted by the school's leadership to increase access to education for children with disabilities and the implementation status of the Ministerial instructions on dropout and repetition were discussed.

30 teachers, 18 primary school teachers and 12 secondary school teachers who have been trained in Inclusive Education were purposely selected to be part of the FGDs. The main purpose of FGDs was to evaluate the effectiveness inclusive education module, the impact of the training provided to the teachers and the implementation of Ministerial Instructions on dropouts and repetitions and the newly adopted Promotion and Repetition Guidelines of 27 June 2024.

Furthermore, to ascertain whether the training of teachers has had an impact on teaching and learning practices, classroom observations were conducted with the main purpose of examining how trained teachers are using the skills and knowledge they have gained from the training to support learners with disabilities. However, classroom observations were conducted in two schools (6 classes) due to end of term school examinations.

## 1. Key Findings

The key findings from focus group discussions, key informant interviews and direct classroom observations done during school visits are as follows:

**Access to education for children with disabilities:** Overall, there is an increased number of children enrolled in school. For CWDS, there is emerging evidence that teachers and peers have been playing a critical role in promoting a conducive school environment that welcomes and treats children equally despite their disability status. Respondents also reported that parents of CWDs have gained positive attitudes towards their Children with disabilities, unlike the underlying negative norms and perceptions of parents and communities towards CWDs have been challenged. Largely the cause of increased enrollment is attributed to:

- Community level awareness raising on the importance of education for all children including those with disabilities.
- Teacher training on IE and teacher support
- More efforts directed towards School feeding
- Parents change of attitude resulting in sending CWDS to school, understanding and playing their role in supporting their children.
- Building more classrooms at schools which has reduced classroom congestion and building new schools within the communities which has reduced the distance covered by children to school.
- The revised instruction on school feeding programs and school flexibility for children who come from vulnerable families and those with compounding vulnerabilities.

Respondent's quotes echo well the causes of increased school enrollment.

"Local leaders take the opportunity of village meetings to sensitise citizens on the importance of sending all children to school, ever since the academic year began, we have received many children because of this strategy used"

"Communities learned of our school being a model school, local leaders identified every child with a disability in their communities, they brought them to our school, to ensure they are comfortable, we have encouraged fellow children to treat them friendly and teachers have been requested to follow on them so that they can learn well, pass exams and enjoy their rights" - Head teacher Ntoma school.

“There is a disability committee in every village, and we have another committee here in school, the two work together to identify and support every child with disabilities” – Headteacher GS Burema

“We have established a self-help basket, every beginning of term we collect all scholastic materials brought by children, keep them and for those who came without some, we share them with them, teacher contributes money and they buy books, pens, soap etc for children who may need them in between the term period” – FGD CSJM

Despite these efforts that have been directed toward increasing school enrollment, some **Challenges** still exist.

- To some extent there are pathways in some schools, but in others pathways are not disability friendly.
- Some teachers have not been trained, and some who were trained have left to other schools. They need to mitigate this dropout. “out of 238 primary teachers trained, 20 teachers have left the school” – DoS
- Inadequate teaching and learning relevant materials/ assistive devices (projectors, specialized equipments like perkins brailers, loop wheelchairs, white cans, hearing aids, Loops – low vision)
- Change of working hours makes it difficult for teachers to cover the lessons planned within a period.

**Training of teachers:** Focus group discussions with teachers and key informant interviews with Head teachers across the visited districts show that the Majority of the teachers have been trained, all 30 teachers who participated in FGD were trained, and most of the teachers across all the 5 districts have been trained on IE.

Teachers reported that the training they received was instrumental in building their knowledge and skills for inclusive education and through classroom observation, there is evidence of enhanced confidence in teaching and supporting CWDs. As a result, CWDs are passing exams. More still, respondents mentioned that training showed them that they can nurture bolder aspirations for children with disabilities during school life.

“one of the ways I handle my student with mental disability is to take him easy, I do not talk to him badly, I ensure he is seated wherever he wants but does not disorganize others, he is my best friend, when he doesn’t want to write, I go with him on black board and he draws with the picture, I encourage him and reward him” – Male teacher senior

“Depending on the disability type and severity, we see progress, some catch up easily, others we provide regular guidance and remedial support” - Female teacher primary 4.

“because of intellectual challenges, we opted for on hand practical training like carpentry, mechanics etc for those that fail general education, and they are doing well” - Head teacher

Although the training content was well prepared and easily adaptable to the learning situation and has been useful, it is reported that the duration was not enough. There was too much information provided for a short period of time. Also, training duration differs depending on who organised the training. For example: Training organized by REB lasted for 10 days, while training organized by Humanity and Inclusion lasted for 3 days. More so, the training was more theoretical, trainees did not have an opportunity to physical see and try using most of the assistive devices (projectors, specialized equipment like perkins brailleurs, loop, wheelchairs, white cans, hearing aids, Loops - low vision,)

**Recommendations**, Respondents recommend that;

- Training duration be Increased to 15 -20 days
- Practical training on the use of assistive devices be part of the training.
- Prior to the training, a pre-test be given to assess the individual knowledge of inclusive education and training be contextualized depending on individual capacities. This will ensure that teachers with the same knowledge are trained together
- Printing and distributing the module (sharing a soft copy of the module) for reference after the training.

**Ministerial instructions on repetition, dropout and promotion:** During interviews with head teachers and FGD with teachers, it was observed that head teachers were aware while some teachers were not aware of the ministerial instructions. Most of them know about: conducting regular inspections of teaching practices, helping teachers to get appropriate TLMs, remedial programmes supporting slow learners and following the curriculum and preparation of pedagogical documents.

Because of their school's regular follow up on learners' attendance, and continuous communication with parents about learning outcomes of learners in addition to the previously mentioned strategies (mobilisation and sensitization.....), dropout cases have been reduced.

“In Nyagatare, the numbers have significantly reduced because of 1 cup of milk per child”.

Specifically, the following practices by Headteachers have reduced dropout and rate of repetition:

- Regular Follow up (CAMIS, “regular reporting of attendance to District – GS Ntoma”)
- Meetings with parents and teachers
- Inspection of teachers' teaching practice

While Teachers do the following:

- Ensure roll call of pupils and students
- Remedial teaching
- Providing counseling and providing guidance
- Being friendly to children – show affection to children
- Identifying CWDs and ensuring they seat comfortably in class – low vision seats in front
- Children helping others during lessons
- Preparation of pedagogical documents
- Following curriculum

## **2. Conclusion.**

The verification exercise shows that The Ministry of Education has achieved equity (DLI 2) related targets:

- Majority of primary and secondary teachers were trained in Inclusive Education and other trainings are ongoing
- The number of learners with special education needs and disabilities is increasing
- The rate of learners’ repetition and dropout cases have significantly reduced

However, there is a need to ensure that teacher training on inclusive education takes into consideration the practical part rather than being theoretical, and the training duration should be increased. There is also need to encourage teachers who have been trained to provide basic skills share experience with their colleagues during school time.

## **School Feeding Program**

In line with the pursuit of quality education, a school feeding programme was introduced in primary and secondary schools. Ngirente emphasized that the implementation of school feeding contributed to reducing school dropouts and improving student performance nationwide.

## **National Education Budgeting:**

The estimated resources for the fiscal year 2024/25 are projected at Frw 5,690.1 billion. The budget estimates for the education sector for FY2024/2025 show that the education budget has reduced by 14.7%.

**Public Finance in the Education Sector.** The GoR has made a progressive commitment to finance the education sector at all levels. Over the past 5 years, there have been progressive efforts to attain the targeted international commitment to allocate 20% of the public budget towards education. As of the fiscal year 2023/24, a 17% nominal increase in the budget towards education was made relative to the 2022/23 fiscal year. It has also emerged that there is a need to invest in ECD programmes, and the Development partners have also made huge direct and indirect investments in the past 5 years. The current strategies used in Rwanda's education include using subsidized<sup>1</sup> interventions such as infrastructure development (building more schools and expanding existing ones), providing adequate teaching and learning materials in schools (books, desks, laptops, etc.), supporting centers of excellence in universities, training teachers, and continuously capacitating them, and maintaining incentives for school attendance such as the school feeding programmes. This will put to question the priorities of decision makers in a more decentralized education system where the relative attention towards education varies across districts as signaled by the comparative performance of schools in exit national examinations at P6, S3 and S6 levels.

## **Inclusive Model Schools**

### **1. Inclusive and Gender responsive gaps in the ESSP.**

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### Learners with disabilities.

There has been a paradigm shift in the education of students with disabilities in existing schools. The shift popularly known as inclusion has witnessed more students with disabilities being educated in regular classrooms. The graph below presents a comparison of learners with disabilities in each level of education for 2017/18 and 2022/23

**Table showing learners with disabilities in each level of education.**

Indicator/Year	2017	2022/23	% change
<b>Total learners with disability</b>	<b>31,770</b>	<b>40,342</b>	21.2
Male	16,807	22,497	25.3
Female	14,963	17,845	16.1
<b>In Preprimary</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>3,085</b>	55.9
Male	829	1,790	53.7
Female	533	1,295	58.8
<b>In Primary</b>	<b>24,980</b>	<b>31,159</b>	19.8
Male	13,317	17,518	23.9
Female	11,663	13,641	14.5
<b>Gen and prof. secondary</b>	<b>4,557</b>	<b>4,983</b>	8.5
Male	2,253	2,591	13
Female	2,304	2,392	3.7
<b>In TVET L1 to L5</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>620</b>	-15.6
Male	318	360	11.7
Female	399	260	-53.5

The table above presents data on learners with disabilities in the education system for 2022/23. Out of a total of 4,456,419 learners, 40,342 (0.9%) are identified as having disabilities. The number of learners admitted in school has increased by 21.2% national wide from 31,770 learners with disabilities to 40,342 learners with disabilities.

In pre-primary education, the number of learners with disabilities represents only 0.5% of the total preprimary learners (540,998).

- Compared to 2016/17, the number of learners with disabilities in pre-primary has increased by 55.9% (from 1,362 to 3,085).
- In primary education, the number of students with disabilities increased from 29,994 to 31,159 comprising 1.1% of the total primary school students (2,838,343).
- In secondary education, the number of students with disabilities increased from 4,849 to 4,983 in 2022/23 comprising 0.6% of the total secondary school students (729,998). For TVET L1-L5, there was an increase from 611 to 620 in 2021/22 students with disabilities (0.3% of total TVET students).

Although some initiatives have been accomplished to mainstream quality inclusive and gender education at different forms and levels of education to achieve the National development agenda, it is important to note that there are challenges in transforming education to respond to gender and inclusive issues. Some of the challenges include the following among others:

- Existence of gender equality and equity issues, especially with TVET where female students still find it difficult to enroll in traditionally male-dominated trades like Engineering, Mechanics, etc.
- Prevailing Gender disparities in Higher Learning Institutions concerning enrolment and completion rates.
- Existing policy practice gaps concerning traditionally marginalized groups such as people living with disabilities (PWDs) and refugee education.
- The implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) teaching and assessment framework doesn't fully integrate themes of sustainable development like the development of positive lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of the culture of peace and non-violence, etc.
- Lack of clarity on the soft indicators of quality education, thus, the need to develop teacher capacity, especially on how to create and nurture inclusive and effective learning environments.

- Gender Based Violence: More efforts are still required to ensure that female learners are freed from negative social norms and the culture of silence about GBV affecting timely reporting, prevention and effective legal assistance.
- Lack of Standard Operating Procedures: There is still a need for establishing Standard Operating Procedures at all centers caring for children with disabilities.
- Lack of Systematic Capacity Development: There is a need for a comprehensive capacity-building program to address capacity needs in the center caring for children with disabilities.

## **2. Recommendations.**

To transform Rwanda's Education systems in order to address the underlying challenges, despite the progress attained during the implementation of ESSP 2018/19 – 2024, will necessitate a precise understanding of the structural drivers of poverty, gender, and inclusivity issues and the trends that will pull the education sector in towards gender and inclusive responsive education. To ensure inclusive and gender responsive quality education, REFAC proposes the following to be incorporated in the review of the next ESSP

In the pre-primary level, the major challenge is that of enrolment, and thus, there is a need to:

- Gradually integrate the pre-primary level into mainstream education at the current pace of investment from the government, development partners, civil society and commitment from parents, thus increasing the net enrolment rate.
- The expansion of the school feeding programme will encourage rapid student enrolment at this level.
- To increase the number of pre-primary schools while moderately reducing the student teacher ratio.
- Increase the number of special education teachers

For the secondary level,

- Construction of more schools for secondary education can stimulate student enrolment.
- Increase the number of qualified teachers in secondary schools
- Increase the number of special education teachers

In regard to cultural norms:

- Education should focus on the deconstruction of biased cultural and social norms that limit girl's education. In regard to gender, girls should be placed in leadership positions in schools, and at home. This suggests that we have to teach by doing, commonly known as the 'men-engage approach' in education. We have to embrace "doing gender and not speaking gender". We have to change gender norms in the classroom and school leadership.

Learners from the most vulnerable groups (children with disabilities, rural children and those from the most poor families) require specialized attention and tailored support for physical, material, and emotional aspects. Addressing the unique needs of students with disabilities, refugees, orphans, and those from the poorest families remains a priority to ensure their holistic development and inclusive educational experience.