

The Rwandan government is building five model schools for children with disabilities, part of a wider push to ensure inclusive education across the country, Minister of Education Joseph Nsengimana said Thursday.

Speaking at the second National Conference on Inclusive Education in Kigali, Nsengimana said educating children with disabilities is not an act of charity, but a responsibility for everyone. The event was organized by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) in partnership with the Learning and Inclusion for Transformation (LIFT) project and other organizations.



#### *The Minister of Education Joseph Nsengimana*

“Educating children with disabilities is a duty, just like teaching other children,” Nsengimana said. “If we do not educate these children, we are not building anything for our country’s future.”

The conference brought together policymakers, teachers, researchers, civil society groups, students, parents and local leaders under the theme: *“Promoting an Inclusive and Disability-Friendly Society to Improve Well-Being: Advancing Special and Inclusive Education in Rwanda.”*

Nsengimana said each of Rwanda’s five provinces, as well as the City of Kigali, will each have one model school. The schools are expected to be completed within four years and will include accessible buildings, specialized classrooms, dormitories, assessment and diagnostic services, and trained teachers. Materials for visually impaired students, including Braille, will also be provided.

Despite progress, the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) says children with severe disabilities still face barriers to education.

“Some children cannot learn in regular schools without specialized support,” said NCPD Executive Secretary Emmanuel Ndayisaba. “The few specialized schools that exist are private and very expensive, making them inaccessible to many parents.”

Ndayisaba said long distances to schools also make daily attendance difficult for some students.

Justin Bizeyimana, a teacher at Umubano Academy in Kigali, said some parents still

doubt the abilities of children with disabilities. “Some parents still believe their children cannot learn,” he said. “Schools also lack sufficient materials to support them.”

According to NCPD data from June 2025, out of persons with disabilities in Rwanda, only 25.8% are employed, while 56.4% are unemployed and 17.7% have incomplete or unknown employment data.

Nsengimana urged all stakeholders to ensure children with disabilities are not left behind. “The education of every child is the foundation of the country’s future. No child should be excluded,” he said.