

Rwanda's disability rights organizations say the national budget remains inadequate to meet the needs of people with disabilities, despite progress in education and social protection.

The Association of Persons with Disabilities in Rwanda (AGHR) said on Thursday that allocations for disability-related programs in the 2024/2025 fiscal year were still limited, particularly in health and infrastructure.

A new AGHR study shows that funding for accessibility infrastructure in public buildings fell from 12% in 2023/2024 to 11% in the current fiscal year. The government allocated Rwf 67.9 billion (\$53 million) for housing and state property management projects benefiting people with disabilities. But in health, funding dropped from Rwf 19.6 billion to Rwf 18.6 billion.

Education spending increased, with Rwf 43.8 billion earmarked to ensure inclusive schooling. Districts nationwide set aside Rwf 505.9 billion for special-needs education, while the City of Kigali allocated Rwf 32.5 billion for education, Rwf 9.7 billion for health, and about Rwf 1.9 billion for social protection programs for vulnerable residents with disabilities.

Still, health allocations for districts fell sharply from Rwf 2.7 billion last year to Rwf 787.8 million this year.

Faustin Renzaho, AGHR's executive director, said stronger accountability was needed in how disability budgets are planned and spent.

"AGHR's inspection of 24 institutions in Kigali revealed that accessibility standards remain very low, especially in schools," he said. "We ask that Rwanda's construction laws be enforced, and that older public buildings also be upgraded so children with disabilities can access education without barriers."

Dr. Mukarwego Beth Nasiforo, chairperson of the National Union of Disability Organizations of Rwanda (NUDOR), said many districts still allocate too little for essential services such as assistive devices, schooling and training.

"People with disabilities have many needs," she said. "When allocations are too low, many are left behind. The disability budget must be increased to ensure it actually reaches those who need it."

Murwanashyaka Everaste, who led the AGHR study, said people with disabilities are

often excluded from budget consultations.

“They are not adequately supported to take part, and there are no specific guidelines requiring their inclusion in budget planning,” he said. “Some districts receive large budgets but allocate as little as Rwf 12 million per year for disability programs.”

He added that the absence of a law requiring institutions to earmark disability budgets has made the issue easier to overlook.

Officials at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning acknowledged the concerns but said inclusion must be addressed across all sectors.

“Funds specifically earmarked for disability programs are often fully spent, but disability is not the responsibility of one sector alone,” said Pascasie Mukarukundo, a ministry official in charge of budget reforms. “Every sector—health, education, agriculture—must show how its allocations will address the needs of people with disabilities so that no one is left behind in national development.”

Rwanda ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 and has pledged under the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure inclusive education, equal access to services, and full participation by 2030. Advocates warn that unless budgets are expanded and laws strengthened, those commitments may fall short.