

# Special Education Overview in Burundi

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Education for disabled people (called special education) is a responsibility for both parents and public authorities. Each country establishes its own structures/institutions according to its cultural and educational values in order to help both handicapped and normal persons. The aim of this paper is to make an exploration of the special education situation in Burundi. The determination of different services offered to disabled people, the extent to which handicapped people are served and current laws on special education are aimed. In this research, content analysis and semi-structured interview were used. The content analysis allowed a review of existing literature on handicapped persons' law and for the semi-structured interview, an interview form was prepared and used to collect informations from administrators of centers for handicapped people. The results showed that Burundi has no special education legislation, no legal classification principle, and no statistics of handicapped persons. Other results are that special education in Burundi is offered in centers of physically, mentally, visually, and hearing impaired persons, which are theoretically under the solidarity ministry. Services that are provided are mainly physical rehabilitation, professional training, literacy, and general education.

*Keywords:* Burundi, special education, disabled people, centers for disabled people, services

## Introduction

In a given country or a society, children education is both a parents and public authorities responsibility. When a child is born, parents want the child to grow and become useful to self, his family and the society. That growth is sustained by parents and public authorities. Parents teach the child from the early age first notions of behaviors and attitudes (motor skills acquisitions, language and speech acquisition, cleanliness, social adaptation, etc.). According to the educational and social existing policy, public authorities ought to assist parents in the children education by providing services that parents are not able to have by their own.

When it is the case of disabled children, their education is very special. Most of the time, it requires much more services and means that parents cannot have and that are different to those provided by public authorities for normal children (school infrastructures, programs, schools materials, etc.). Because of this situation, public authorities have established institutions and structures that aim disabilities prevention and adequate services provision to disabled people in order to heal or mitigate disability effects and allow a better social life comparable to the non disabled people. In this order, each country or society establishes its own structures and or institutions according to its cultural and educational values in order to help both handicapped and normal persons.

## What Is Special Education?

In general, special education, also called special teaching, is a training or an education provided to learners

with special needs and their families. It contributes, in collaboration with those who take part in educative and social action, to the education of children and teenagers or to the support of adults with psychological, physical disabilities, or behavioural disorders or with integration difficulties.

This education is characterized by adaptation of programs, teaching methods, school materials, physical environment (buildings, school equipments, etc.) to each learner's handicap situation, that is to say, to each learner's needs and differences. This supposes established programs depending on disability type and learning methods on measure, adapted equipments and materials, adapted programs, and other elements that allow learners to reach a high degree of self-sufficiency. That kind of needs is concerning persons with learning problems, communication troubles, emotional and behavioural problems, development troubles, and sensorial disabilities. Students with that kind of needs have possibilities to be given additional services, such as a different teaching-learning approach, use of technologies, adapted learning zones, or different resources.

According to Figen Eres (2010), special education covers children between the ages of 0-18 who show some differences from other children because of their physical, mental, psychological, emotional, or social characteristics and cannot, therefore, benefit from the regular education services.

In addition to this general review, special education departments and institutions of some countries can adopt a special definition in accordance to their situation. For example, in Turkey, according to the Special Education Services Directive of the National Ministry of Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği), special education is expressed as a teaching conducted in order to meet education and social needs of individuals in need of special education based specially on trained staff, improved training (education) programs and methodologies and individual competencies of individuals in need of special education with environments appropriate to development characteristics (National Ministry of Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı), 2006).

### **Aim of the Research**

The aim of this research is to make an exploration of the special education situation in Burundi. The determination of different services offered to the disabled people (children and adults) according to type of disability, the extent to which handicapped people are served and the current laws on special education are aimed. The research analyses the dispositions and structures set up by the Burundi towards people living with disabilities. This will provide special education sector stakeholders the current situation in Burundi as compared to other countries and any gaps for future improvements.

In this research, the following question was answered: What is the current situation of special education in Burundi. The answer to this question is derived from answers to the following sub-questions.

1. What are the legal dispositions for people with disabilities?
2. What is the situation of the special education staff?
3. What are the services that are offered to handicapped people?
4. What are the numbers of people with disabilities in Burundi?

### **Method**

In this research, an exploration of current laws in Burundi was made in order to identify laws and articles applicable to special education domain in Burundi. This content analysis (Bordeleau, 1988) was associated to a semi-structured interview with authorities of centers which serve handicapped people. In order to conduct that

interview, prepared interview form was used. Before using the form, it was verified if it was a good instrument to collect all essential informations to understand services offered to people with disabilities and the conditions in which they are offered. So, the form has been analyzed by two specialists who work with centers of disabled people and organizations of defense and promotion of handicapped people's rights in Burundi. The two specialists analyzed separately the form and after their suggestions, the final version of the form was adopted. The form has 15 questions which seek various informations, like the type of disabilities that are served, the age and other requirements for admission in the center, the role of the government and the collaboration with disabled children's parents.

### **Data Collection**

In order to collect datas, the researcher went to each center for disabled people. Before this visit, information on their number and location was obtained from the general directorate of human rights and general directorate of higher school. The researcher visited each center/school and met with the administrator. Meetings for interview took place in their offices and were conducted as following: After a brief introduction of the researcher and the explanation of the research purpose, the administrator was given a copy of the interview form to allow him to follow while the researcher was asking questions. The answers were written in the reserved space on the interview form. At the end of the interview, the administrator was invited to add any other necessary information which was not mentioned.

### **Results**

In this chapter, results of the research are presented. Special education legislation in Burundi is presented first, and then follow disability classification, prevalence, frequency, services offered to handicapped people, staff training, access to available services and collaboration. The content analysis allowed a review on special education legislation, disability classification, prevalence, and frequency. The semi-structured interview revealed the special education supervisor ministry, disabled people education organization, the staff training, access to available services and collaboration.

#### **Special Education Legislation**

During the exploration of current laws in Burundi, it was noted that the special education legislation is almost inexistent in Burundi. Burundi has neither legislation nor policy (or programs) specific to persons with disabilities.

In Burundi, some current laws have few items that are relevant to special education. Those articles are found in laws of the Education Ministry and the Ministry of National Solidarity. From the Ministry of National Solidarity, it can be mentioned that the recent ratification by the Burundi government on March 26, 2014 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of December 13, 2006. However, there is not yet any law which shows in details how this convention is being implemented in Burundian context.

The current constitution of Burundi (adopted in 2005) does not explicitly refer to education of children and adults with disabilities. Only the Article 22 states that no one can be discriminated because of his origin, race or his physical, or mental disability. This is simply the repetition of the non-discrimination principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in its 3rd Article).

From the ministry in charge of education, two decrees are important: the decree No. 1/25 of July 23, 1989 on education reorganization and the decree No. 1/19 of September 10, 2013 on organization of basic and

secondary education. From the 1st decree, the 12th Article states that special education of persons with disabilities must be proposed by the ministry in charge of social action. According to this article, the Ministry of Education is not responsible of education of Burundian with special needs. By this, special education is not an education but a kind of assistance, because it is under social action ministry which is not involved in education programs.

From the decree No.1/19 of September 10, 2013, three articles are important in special education domain. The 3rd Article on J Paragraph gives the definition of individuals with special needs and mentions deficiency types. According to this article, persons with special needs are persons who are facing important obstacles in their learning (e.g., language disorders, attention disorders, etc.) or who have motor or sensory limitations. Four types of deficiency, physical, intellectual disabilities, hearing loss, and visual impairments are mentioned.

The 4th Article enunciates a general and universal principle access for all to instruction. It states as following, “Every citizen has equal right to instruction, to education and culture.” This is simply a repeat of the 22nd Article of the constitution, which conforms to the 3rd Article of the United Nation (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The 15th Article gives goals of education organized for individuals with special needs. It says, “The teaching to persons with special needs has the goals of offering an education adapted to their needs and possibilities in order to prepare them to a decent socio-professional future.”

It is necessary to mention that this law gives details on preschool education, basic education, and trade teaching and literacy organization and goals, but says nothing about individuals with special needs education. It is just a repetition of the 12th Article of the 1989’s decree. It is said that the organization of the education of individuals with special needs is governed by a decree, but in this law, it is a total confusion which is established: While the decree of 1989 gives to the social action ministry the prerogatives of issuing a such decree, the 2013’s decree does not specify if it is the same social action ministry or the ministry in charge of education or any other ministry which is responsible for issuing the so expected decree. Therefore, people would not know which ministry to speak to when calling for the dicree enacting.

According to the 15th Article of the 2013 law, it is clear that special education is not governed by any law but basically depends on the volunteers’ good will. Following the formulation of a national action plan 2000 to 2009 period, a commission in charge of special education was appointed via a ministerial ordinance No. 640/01 of August 7,2000, however, Burundi is yet to have special education structure in the Education Ministry.

Even if there is no specific law, Burundi has subscribed to two important continental scope charters: the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child.

According to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples, “Every person has right to education” (Art. 17) and the 4th paragraph of the 18th article recognize “the right to specific protection measures in relation to physical and moral needs” to older and handicapped persons (Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1981). The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child ensures the education right to child with disability. According to its 13th Article 2nd Paragraph, countries which have subscribed to the charter must ensure that the handicapped child “has effective access to training, to professional life preparation, to recreational activities in order to ensure an individual full integration and blooming” (OAU, 1990).

### **Classification**

The review of available literature showed that Burundi has no legal classification principle of the handicapped persons.

In Burundi, an attempt to classify handicapped persons was done by the General Census of Population and Habitat of 2008 whose report was published in 2011. In this report, a classification in eight types called “major handicaps” is done. Unfortunately, the meaning of “major handicaps” expression is not given and it is not easy to understand it, because it is not used in documents and scientific classification works. Those eight disability types enumerated by the census are blind, deaf, dumb, deaf-mute, infirmity of lower limb, infirmity of upper limb, mental deficiency, and other disability.

Two things can be said on this Burundian classification attempt. Firstly, it is a classification by type of disability. Secondly, the classification subdivides one disability type, physical disability, in two groups (infirmity of lower limb and infirmity of upper limb). This distinction/separation is not objective unless it is because of the reason of forecast services to be offered.

Another thing about this classification is that other disabilities whose names are not mentioned are combined in the group called “other disability.” What we can say on this “other disability” type is that it is difficult to understand it. Is it another “major disability” group? or Are in this group other disability groups which can be called “minor”? Anyway, this classification shows that there are other forms of disabilities which have not been identified by the census.

This kind of classification (major disability) is also used in another attempt to counting disabled people in Burundi which has been conducted in two provinces on seventeen that are found in Burundi (International Handicap, 2011). In this attempt, the physical disability group which was divided in two groups by the general census was unique, the blind, deaf, dumb, and deaf-mute groups are combined in one group called “sensory deficiencies” and another group called “multiple disabilities” appears while “other disability” group is not used. The author did not unfortunately give his understanding of the different used disability types.

### **Prevalence and Frequency**

For a given country, the frequency of individuals with disabilities is to be understood as the total number of disabled persons and the number of disabled persons for each type of disability in a given time (one year for example). More concretely, how many physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, blind, deaf, etc. people does a country have at a given time (Sucuoğlu, 2009)? In addition to these global numbers, the prevalence can also be defined as the fraction of the total population of a country or the distribution of the different disability types of the disabled people to total population in a country. It is called prevalence rate.

In this case, how many people have disability in Burundi? How many are they for each type of disability? Answering to this kind of questions is not easy in Burundi context, because available literature revealed that neither the number of disabled people by each disability nor the total number of disabled people in the whole country for all disabilities is known. Burundi does not have disabled people statistics and reliable researches have not yet been done in order to determine the handicapped people’s prevalence, and it is the same for the frequency, which is to be understood as the number of new cases that are identified in a given time (one year for example) (Sucuoğlu, 2009). Like the prevalence, statistics of this disabled people characteristics (the frequency) which is very important in special education, is also not known. Therefore, in Burundi, the number of disabled people and their frequency are not known.

Relaying on World Bank (WB) and World Health Organization's (WHO) estimations which states that almost 15% of the world population are disabled (WB & WHO, 2012), it can be concluded that about 1,200,000 of Burundians are with disability. Unfortunately, this number cannot inform about the number of disabled children or adults and the number of disabled people for each kind of disability. Likewise, reliable researches must be done to confirm or refute the WB and WHO forecasts, because some countries have lower while others higher rates. In case of Burundi, the available numbers of disabled people are found in the general census of the population and habitat report. According to this census, 4.5% of Burundians, that is about 362,000 persons, live with major disability. Among this disabled people number, 18.3% are blind, 8.6% are deaf, 5% are dumb, 2% are deaf-dumb, 23% are physically disabled (14.5% are lower-limb handicapped and 8.6% are upper-limb handicapped), 9.2% are mentally deficient, and 33.8% have other disabilities.

As it can be seen, the numbers of this report are very lower than the 15% of WB and WHO. This reveals a problem of truthfulness of the census report, because generally countries that have reliable statistics on disabled people show numbers that are slightly lower or higher than the WB and WHO numbers (Çelik & Ertay, 2007). There is no reason why it can be different for Burundi. This inaccuracy of Burundian numbers has been caused by the fact that the census has been conducted on very small group of disabilities and by that means a big part of disabled people has not been documented. This can be explained by the fact that the General Census of the Population and the Habitat is not a scientific work done by specialists of special education domain. These numbers have been obtained through statements given by persons who do not have required skills in disability identification. Indeed, it was the head of the family or the main family member (in the most cases, the father or the mother) who declared to the census agent that one or more members of his family had a major disability. The census agent was not able to verify those statements.

As it already mentioned, the semi-structured interview revealed the special education supervisor ministry, disabled people education organization, the staff training, access to available services and collaboration.

### **Supervisor Ministry**

In order to know the special education supervisor ministry, the following question was asked to the administrators: "What is the supervisor ministry of your center? Do you report to that ministry? Is your center private or public?"

Centers administrators' answers to these three questions showed that persons with special needs, both children and adults benefit from education in public or private centers which are theoretically under the responsibility of the national solidarity ministry. By this, it can be said that special education in Burundi is under responsibilities of the solidarity ministry. Only disabled children whose disability cannot prevent them to follow the general education can be registered in public primary schools. They are those who have a mild physical disability that is those who can write, easily move around, walk long distances which are generally done by Burundian school children, and can adapt to physical structure of buildings (physical environment in classrooms, corridors, plays grounds, latrines, etc.) which are designated to non-disabled children, because no adaptation is made to facilitate disabled children access to those infrastructures. They are also the children whose intellectual and mental capabilities allow them to succeed classroom evaluations organized by teachers. In this context, mild mental disabled children, who need more supervision and assistance in order to stay in the general education system, are left out of the general education because of many class repetitions and must be exiled in informal professional education in centers. The private centers for disabled people are independent.

Except a simple collaboration with the solidarity ministry, they work in total independence and they report not to the solidarity ministry but to their founders who are churches or non-governmental organizations (NGO).

During this research, it was also found that there was a general school from Education Ministry which organized training for visually and hearing impaired children.

### **Disabled People Centers and Provided Services**

At this level, the goal was to determine centers specialized for disabled people, services that are offered, and access conditions to services. Results showed that there are 14 centers for disabled people in Burundi. Centers are divided in centers for physically disabled (it is the main groups with six centers), centers for blinds, for deafs and deaf-dumbs, and for mental retarded people. The oldest center was founded in 1965. There is also a secondary school which trains hearing and visually impaired children.

### **Centers for Physically Disabled People**

There are six centers for physically disabled people in Burundi. The results of the interview with administrators of these centers revealed the following informations. One center is public and five others are private. The private centers have been founded and are managed by churches or charity organizations. The main goal of these centers is the socio-professional integration. For this reason, they assist people learn skills like sewing, welding, woodwork, weaving, etc. during two year period. For learners without a primary school certificate, a three years period of literacy and general training is offered before the professional training. At the end of the professional training, disabled people are assisted with start up equipment (a material kit, most of the time) in order to set up a small project which allows to earn some money and by this increase their life standard (socio-professional integration). In addition to this first mission, some centers offer physiotherapy services and physical rehabilitation in order to alleviate the disability effect. They offer rehabilitative cares (orthopaedics and physiotherapy) which allow disabled people to acquire more autonomy and access to more wellbeing in their daily life. Other centers associate physical rehabilitation (physiotherapy and/or orthopaedic equipment provision) with basic education. Here, the goal is to allow disabled children to follow basic education, and at the same time, benefit from physiotherapy services in order to improve their physical conditions. In order to facilitate education access, children with moving difficulties or living far from the centers reside at centers residences.

Centers for physically disabled people serve people from various age according to services needed. Those in need of physiotherapy and orthopaedic services are served from their early age, children who enter primary school are admitted when they are six or seven years old (admission age to general primary school) and those who benefit from socio-professional training are admitted when they are 13 or 14 years old, that is at age of primary school end.

### **Centers for Mental and Multiple Disabled People**

There are only two centers which serve mentally, psycho motor, and emotionally disabled people in Burundi. The results of the interview with administrators of these centers revealed the following informations. The two centers have been founded and are managed by the catholic church. Those centers serve people who are mentally deficient (children with mental retardation, autism, trizomy 21, and epilepsy) or with motor impairments (cerebral palsy like tetraplegics, hemiplegics, diplegia, microcephalic, and macrocephalic). People served are 0-25 years old and centers have goals like:

1. Autonomy and basic socialisation goals: Hygiene and cleanliness, meals, dressing and undressing, movements, and the rhythm of the day;

2. Communication goals: Learning how to greet, express needs, listen to others and verbalize emotions;
3. Psychomotor stimulation;
4. Family and socio-economic life integration, because those children are mostly marginalized.

Centers are both residential and non residential (boarding and non-boarding). Children who attend education while living far from the centers are allowed to reside in the centers residences. Children who benefit from rehabilitation are brought by their parents and returned to their homes after treatment. The center at the capital organizes a free transport service for children in the morning and afternoon. Three types of activities are offered in the centers:

1. Rehabilitation (physiotherapy services): Children are treated by a specialist (physiotherapist) in order to allow them recover and exercise their motor skills. In addition to that child treatment, the specialist trains the parent (who brought the child) in elementary but useful gestures, so that once out of the center he can help the child in exercising learned movements.
2. Education: Taking into account the child's potential and psychomotor behaviour, the centers organize a special schooling. The programs contents are elementary general skills (math, reading, writing, and life skills).
3. Professional training: It is a gradual preparation to socio-professional community and family integration of mentally and motor disabled young adults. In this kind of training, youngs are trained on small business (chicken farming, agriculture, soap handcrafting, etc.) in order to allow them integration into the community by exercising an income-generating activity.

#### **A School for Children With Emotional Disorders (Autism and Trizomy 21)**

The following informations were collected during the interview with the (de) head of the school. Created in 2014, this private center receives children with autism or trizomy 21 from two years of age and plans to offer services up to 18 years of age. The center is non residential and services are delivered five days a week (Monday to Friday) and 12 hours a day. Children are brought by their parents and picked later in the evening. This daily transport issue associated with the fact that the school is not free constitute a limitation (a barrier) which is the reason of few registrations. The goal of the center is the personality and autonomy development through educational plays, language and writing learning through pictures, shapes, colours, body hygiene learning, interaction, and fear overcome learning, etc.. Another goal is to bring assistance to parents of children with emotional disorders in order to alleviate the burden by teaching them how to deal with their children's non-adapted and non-appropriate behaviors and reactions.

#### **Schools for Deafs and Deafs-Dumbs**

There are three centers of hearing deficient people, also called schools for deafs and deaf-dumbs. The results of the interview with administrators of these schools revealed the following informations. One of the three centers serves children who are at the same time deaf and blind. Created after 1980 by religious organizations, they offer disabled children and adults three different services: the appropriate communication language (the sign language), primary education, and professional training. The first service offered is the sign language learning which allows communication, given that deaf people cannot use speech. This program takes two years. It is offered to children preparing for primary school and adults under 22 years of age. The second service type is primary education and is offered to school aged children (from four years old). After one to three years pre-primary period during which children are initiated to sign language, they follow the Burundian general primary school program. This program delivered throughout sign language takes six years (the same for

general primary school in Burundi). The third service is professional training and is offered to deaf and/or deaf-dumb children who finished primary school and young adults (teenagers) who attend centers, because they did not attend primary school and exceeded school age. This professional training is the same with the one offered in other disabled people centers, has the same mission and takes two to three years.

Schools for deaf children are residential and courses (teachings) take place five days a week (Monday to Friday) and six hours a day (from 7:30 a.m. to 13:00 p.m.). However, children who live near centers can attend school from their homes.

### **Schools/Centers for Blind People**

Burundi has two centers for blind people. The results of the interview with administrators of these centers revealed the following informations. These centers are established and managed by churches. They offer services similar to deaf and deaf-dumb children schools'. It is the teaching of Braille and the socio-integration preparation of blind people who exceeded school age. The Burundian general primary school program is offered through Braille alphabet. Children candidates to this school have total blindness or partial blindness (visual impairment, they cannot see letters of alphabet) and are seven years old. Before the beginning of primary school program, the children are trained for one or two years in pre-primary program which initiates them to Braille alphabet and mobility. These schools are residential schools and courses take place five days a week (Monday to Friday) and six hours a day (7:30 a.m. to 13:00 p.m.). This program takes six years and in addition to general program courses, mobility course is carried on (begun in pre-primary) in order to teach children how to orient themselves in different places (in school areas or elsewhere) and a sense development course (touch, taste, or smell) is taught in order to help children develop things differentiation by using senses.

After primary school, children get primary school certificate and those who are not admitted to secondary school registered in a three years professional training.

### **A General School With Visually and Hearing Impaired (Impaired) Children**

From 2012-2013 school year, visually and hearing impaired students (who succeeded 6th class national exam) are enrolled in a school of a town in the center of the country. The results of the interview with the head of that secondary school (Lycee) revealed some aspects of this attempt of inclusive education. During the 2013-2014 school year (that is at the second year of the project), 13 visually and 16 hearing impaired students were registered. These students are taking lectures (lessons) in the same classrooms with their non-disabled peers. In other words, there are three categories of students in the classroom: non-disabled, visually and hearing impaired students. There are also three types of teachers in the same class for a lesson at the same time: a general teacher (course instructor), two special teachers, a sign language, and a braille alphabet specialists. While the general teacher is presenting (exposing) the lesson, the sign language specialist teacher translates the general teacher communications to hearing impaired students and the braille specialist teacher transcribes in Braille, for the benefit of visually impaired students. Classroom evaluations (midterm quizzes and term exams) are also done with translations: The general teacher prepares a questionnaire in general teaching-learning language for the whole class, the questionnaire is then translated in the two communication languages of the two disabled students groups, and then answers given by those disabled students are also translated in the general teacher teaching language who marks and gives notes and grades corresponding to each student's work.

Even if a two years period is not enough for an objective evaluation, positive elements and limits have been inventoried by the school headmaster. Among positive elements, the government will to support this

inclusive education has been mentioned. The Burundi government does its best to support inclusive education both financially and materially. Another positive point is a good achievement level of those disabled students. Compared to their non-disabled peers, there is no difference in classroom success. The last positive point is the cooperative spirit which quickly rose between disabled and non-disabled students: According to the school head master, non-disabled students support their disabled peers in some activities accomplishment, such as laundry, dish washing, visually impaired students are assisted, so that they cannot hit any obstacles while moving in school areas. And, a positive attitude is that non-disabled students developed quickly and independently how to communicate with disabled students. Among obstacles that must be overcome the first is the lack of qualified special teachers. Special teachers are very few and this is a big issue for performance. Another aspect of this issue is the training level (qualification) of available special teachers. For the first school level (7th, 8th, and 9th years), the issue does not exist really, but the government must think and plan a training of special teachers at a university level who will assist students with special needs beyond the basic school 4th level. Otherwise, the inclusion will stop at the basic school.

A second challenge is about the equipment and material needed in special teachers' and disabled students' tasks. The government must make much more efforts to provide material (special papers, typewriters, etc.) and textbooks written in the language understood by the two disabled students groups. The third challenge to which it is necessary to find a solution is the boarding negative effect. The two groups of students with special needs live in school residences while their classmates do not. Disabled students stay in the same dormitories not with their classmates but with high level non-disabled students. This occasions an interaction issue: disabled students interact with non-disabled students who are older than them and from higher classes than theirs. So, the interaction between disabled and non-disabled students of the same age and the same classes (this interaction is the main inclusion importance) is established only during lessons hours. Without denying important effects brought by this project in Burundian educational area, it is really a revolution, it is not unjust to accuse the project to focus only on two types of disabilities (visually and hearing impairments) while there are many others.

### **Staff Training**

The results of the interview showed that in Burundi special education domain lacks enough and adequately trained staff. In formal training structures, only psychologists, educators (general teachers) are trained. In the survey conducted to authorities of disabled people centers, the lack of trained staff (special teachers, pedologists, audiologists, speech therapists, therapists, physiotherapists, etc.) was identified as being one of the most important issues, because they are not trained locally. Centers struggle to get staff. For example, schools for blinds and deafs recruit general teachers and train them in Braille alphabet or in Burundian sign language during a very short period of three months. With the support of NGO and friends organizations, one or two staff can be trained abroad. It is the same for physical rehabilitation centers. Due to benefactors, they can train one or two staff abroad and others are trained locally in service. Because of this in service training, the possessed skills and knowledges are not certified by an academic document (diploma or certificate) and are not recognized by educational authorities.

### **Access to Available Services**

The absence of reliable data on disabled people's and children's situation in Burundi does not allow a precise view on disabled children's access to education and disabled people's to available services. According

to United Nations of Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 90% of disabled children in developing countries do not go to school. Burundi being one of these countries, its situation is not different. According to the National Action Plan of Education for All (1997-2010), only 23% of disabled children in Burundi go to school. Apart from the insufficiency of structures (centers) which offer services and the services poor quality, there are real issues in accessing the existing structures. Those issues are mainly the intake capacity issues, transport issues, and financial issues.

Centers which give assistance to disabled people are very few and their intake capacity is very limited. Burundi has 15 centers for around one million of disabled people. The other major barrier is the transport issue. For those who attend centers while living in their homes, it is very difficult to move out every day, because transport costs become very high for poor families. The financial issues are about the required fees to access some services in centers. Because of lack of enough financial means schools of blinds and deafs ask parents to pay school fees, called contribution or participation charges. Likewise, services in physical rehabilitation centers, except services to children under five years of age, are not free. This is the reason why many disabled persons from poor families cannot benefit from those services.

In addition to these three issues, diagnostic problem is another one. Burundi has not yet set up an early diagnostic and evaluation system, so that disabilities are diagnosed very earlier and a document attesting the existence of disability is delivered. Because of this diagnostic problem, disabilities are identified when they are at advanced stage (when anyone can see it) and this affect negatively provided care quality. No one can ignore the importance of early diagnosis and treatments provided at young age.

According to the conducted survey, it resulted that children are admitted in centers without any evaluation of their disabilities. No medical document is required (because it cannot be delivered) to children who want to register and attend schools for deafs and blinds. According to the survey results, a child to be admitted in a school of deafs needs to produce a psychiatrist report; other schools admit children after having a discussion with the parents or the tutors and a commitment to pay contribution fees. Other centers authorities asserted that a child is admitted after a center authority observation. This has disadvantages, such as the child admission in a center which is not interested of the child disability or the provision of services that are not appropriate to child disability level.

### **Collaboration**

The collaboration topic is one of the current trends in special education. Agencies or centers that serve disabled people work in collaboration or cooperation in order to offer best services by information or research results exchange (Skrtic, Horn, & Clark, 2009). Institutions also highlight the parents involvement in every service offered to children for a best efficiency (Sucuoğlu, 2009; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2010).

In this topic, it was aimed to find out if in their daily work, special education actors work in collaboration and wether disabled children's parents or relations are involved in children's education. Results show the following collaboration aspects:

**Centers work independently.** However, collaboration exists between the government through the solidarity ministry and centers. From the law point of view, it is the minister who authorizes the center to open and to work. In the operation of these centers, the government provides from time to time a financial or material support. In the context of free health costs to children under five years of age, the government pays to centers treatment costs that would be paid by disabled children of that age. Centers also work in collaboration

with international organizations and agencies (World Food Program (WFP), Handicap International, Christian Blind Mission, Liliane Foundation, etc.) which bring them experience, including staff training and material provision (books, papers, wheelchairs, prostheses, orthoses, food, etc.).

**Collaboration with disabled persons parents is not generalized.** Only centers for children with emotional disorders and those with rehabilitation mission (physiotherapeutic cares) organize working sessions with parents or tutors. During those sessions, parents are sensitized and given elementary informations or attitude to be taken in order to sustain center acquisitions. It is better to mention here that this collaboration is not a legal requirement. It depends on the will and philosophy of the center.

Another type of collaboration is the one seen between disabled people rights defense organizations. Spurred by handicap International disabled community organizations and disabled people centers are grouped in three main organizations in order to give more power to their claims. Those organizations are:

1. The network of associations of disabled people of Burundi, established in 2006, and its main goal is to ensure disabled people's dignity and equal opportunities and facilitate their integration in Burundian society.
2. Disabled people centers network, established in 2006.
3. Disabled people union of Burundi, created in 1986 and its mission is the protection and promotion of disabled people's right (Retrieved from the Website <http://assoraphb.wordpre>).

### **Obstacles to Disabled Children Education**

Disabled children education in Burundi faces many barriers which prevent its development and effectiveness. Some of these obstacles are the lack of a clear education policy for disabled children and young people, the training in orthopedology which is not adequately ensured to trainers, the lack of necessary and appropriate teaching material, the lack of appropriate intake facilities, and local communities which are not enough sensitized on disabled children education and their school and professional integration (Nzeyimana, 2008).

At the legal point of view, children with special needs education framework is not clear and complete. The current law does not provide for special provisions which regulate disabled children education. In countries where disabled children education is at a satisfactory level, a rich regulation determines its goals, missions, framework, and responsibilities. The establishment of this law is the responsibility of public authorities. They set up all the necessary mechanisms, such as trainers and children training programs which integrate handicapped aspect, the establishment of management authorities of special education in national education management services, the elaboration of strategies which allow the effective application of disabled children rights and funding mechanisms. At the economic side, special education does not receive direct government funding. Disabled people's centers must fund their programs, by their own means, by setting up income generating projects (self-financing projects), by relations with benefactors and partners (NGO, churches, etc.), and by financial contribution from disabled children parents. This is double obstacle to special education access. Firstly, the fact that centers lack of enough financial means is the reason why all disabled children cannot benefit from education. Secondly, the financial contribution asked to parents prevents enrolment of many disabled children because of most Burundian families economic poverty. The Burundian culture also remains an obstacle which must be overcome. From the past, disabled people arouse biases, a situation that occasioned negative attitudes towards disabled persons. These negative attitudes could be physical abuses, even the death, confinements in homes, feeling of shame for parents who gave birth to a disabled child, keeping away or hiding

from public. Even nowadays, some of these negative attitudes prevail in Burundi society. Some Burundians consider as a divine punishment the birth of a disabled child, that there is no future for a disabled child, that he/she will be eternally assisted, that there is no need to enroll him/her at school, etc.. All these cultural considerations are at the origin of the disabled children education rights denial. To overcome these cultural obstacles, a large sensitization and call for awareness change of all involved structures (government, families, local communities, disabled persons, etc.) must be carried on.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to show the extent to which disabled people are served in Burundi. To do this, two research methods have been used. The first method, called content analysis allowed an exploration and an analysis of current regulation in Burundi in order to determine laws and laws items which govern the disabled people, especially their education. The second method used is a semi-structured interview. Disabled people centers' authorities (directors or deputies) participated in it. An interview form was used. As a result, it was found that special education is not regulated in Burundi. While in many other countries, fundamental law (the constitution) has entire section of special education; while in many countries, many decrees specify principles, goals, missions, definitions, and different practices in special education, no decree is available in Burundi. The constitution acknowledges the general principle of education right and the government responsibility to ensure the education for all. The new law No. 1/19 of September 10, 2014 on basic and secondary education in Burundi reserves only three articles to special education. The J Paragraph of the 3rd Article gives the definition of an individual with special needs and disability types recognized in Burundi. In the meaning of this article, only four disabilities, physical, intellectual, hearing, and visual impairments are acknowledged. It would have been good to further the classification willingness and give the meaning of the four disabilities in order to know who is physically, intellectually, hearing, or visually impaired. In this law, the 15th Article is more interesting. It presents the goals of the education to persons with special needs. Unfortunately, this law does not give more details and stops by acknowledging in this article that special education is governed by a decree. It is this decree which will govern special education and, we think, will give all details of special education aspects that all Burundians are impatiently waiting for. Other thing, the dependance of special education services to the solidarity ministry proves that Burundi considers special education as a kind of assistance offered to vulnerable persons, in distress situation. So, it is an informal training. This is a proof that, in Burundi, individuals with disabilities are not yet considered to be taken into account when elaborating education policies.

Looking at the general principle of non-discriminatory education, education in Burundi is still being discriminatory. In fact, in Burundi, education system supports the separation principle between "normal" children education and disabled children education. While the Burundi government makes much more efforts to general education, disabled children education is dropped out, mostly left to benefactors. These benefactors, as charitable works, try their best to help and supervise disabled children and adults. But, because of lack of enough financial and maternal means, their service is limited and of poor quality.

Disabled people receive services from 15 centers. There are centers for physically, hearing, visually, and mentally impaired people. Their services are physical rehabilitation and professional training. Hearing or visually impaired people's centers, also called school for deaf or blind people, offer a general primary education (that is the general education offered to Burundi normal children in basic schools) using Braille

alphabet or Burundian sign language, as a teaching-learning language, and a professional training whose goals is the socio-professional integration. Mental retarded people's centers, also offer rehabilitation services to children with motor and cerebral palsy, a professional training and a special education in which some skills (language, body cleanliness, writing, math, etc.) are taught to increase autonomy.

Burundi does not have a center for gifted children education and such education is not planned, however, special education is not only aimed for the disabled but also for the highly gifted (Eres, 2010).

Access to offered services is limited. This is caused by a limited intake capacity of centers, a transport issue which obliges disabled persons to walk long distances to reach centers where services are delivered and caused by financial problems, because to benefit from some services (education, physiotherapy care, for example) beneficiaries must pay while for most cases they are not able. To overcome the financial barriers, Burundi government supports (pays back to centers) treatment costs that would be paid by disabled children under five years of age, as it is done for non disabled children for the same age. However, disabled children up five years of age do not benefit from this advantage. In addition, while general primary school children benefit from a free education, disabled children enrolled in deaf and blind people's schools still pay school fees, called participation fees. We think that these fees must be supported by the government in order to be just towards all Burundian children.

Disabilities identification and classification is very incomplete in Burundi. There is no evaluation structure which can deliver, after appropriate evaluation tests, a certificate which certifies disability existence. This poses a serious issue in determining the number of persons with disabilities. In general, the classification is done in different ways, such as the classification according to the type of disability, classifications that put together some categories like visual, hearing disabilities, and the classification in two groups, common and rare deficiencies. According to this classification in two groups, specific learning difficulties, speech and language disorders, mental retardation, and emotional disorders constitute the common deficiencies group. In the rare deficiencies group, we find deficiencies like multiple deficiencies, hearing impairments, orthopaedic deficiencies, other health deficiencies, visual impairments, autism, hearing-visual deficiency, brain injury, and developmental delay (Diken, 2010).

In some countries, where special education legislation is developed, the disability classification is defined by education agencies. In Burundi context, there is no clear definition of disabled person or disability expressions that are accepted. "Major disability" expression is used, but it is not also defined. This is why this expression encompasses big disability groups (mental, physical, and sensorial) that can be seen by anyone by a simple look. This is also the source of statistics issue. Because of this identification and classification issue, and a lack of scientific researches, it is not possible to know the exact number of disabled children and adults, their repartition according to disability types, their prevalences rates and their frequency. Trained staff in special education is also a big issue. A side doctors, psychologists and pedagogists training, Burundian education system does not train locally special teachers or any other staff necessary to special education, and general teachers are not given special education courses in their initial training. As a consequence, there is a lack of trained staff in disabled people's centers. To address this issue, centers, helped by their partners, train needed staff on the work place (a general teacher is recruited and trained in the needed area) or abroad.

During this research, two important aspects of special education development have been identified: The collaboration and the government will of changing the selective, discriminatory into an inclusive school. The collaboration between the education and disabled people's support partners (the government, disabled people's

centers, disabled persons organizations, or NGO) is a good sign. It is by there that passes the special education improvement in all countries. In addition to this collaboration will to give dignity to disabled persons, Burundi government, with the help of its partners, decided to introduce, through an “Education for All” program, the inclusive education. The education system whose principle is education for all children, without consideration of disability, in a same school and the same aged children in the same classroom mobilizes from 2010 the government educative services. The education of visually, physically, and hearing impaired children with their non-disabled peer is being implemented in two pilot provinces of the country. In the same way, from the 2012-2013 school year, a pilot school enrolls and teaches together visually and hearing impaired children and non-disabled in the 4th level classrooms of the basic education. It is a real revolution in Burundi education universe.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study showed that special education in Burundi is still at the beginning in spite of its 50 years of existence. Totally abandoned to churches and charity organizations, which organize it in disabled people’s centers, this education faces serious issues, such as the lack of law, financial and material means, and Burundian cultural heritage. This is the reason why assisted disabled persons are very few and offered services are of poor quality. The fact that all disabled people’s centers are related to solidarity ministry and not to the ministry in charge of education shows that services offered to disabled persons are not education but a social assistance. If Burundi government wants to be in accord with the school for all, the classroom for all and the quality education for all (ICE, 2008), it must quickly take some of the following measures:

1. Setting up a clear law (legislation) which determines the disabled children education feasibility. Due to that law, education ministry’s structures in charge of special education will be created. This will allow allocation of a budget part from the general government budget to the special education sector. In addition, every education component, whether special or general, must be under the education ministry authority.

2. Setting up a special education staff training system. Trained and enough staff training must be organized in Burundian education structures. Burundi government must plan to train, at all education levels, trainers in special education, by creating special education departments in high education ministry and by integrating special education courses in training of general teachers for basic education.

3. The same way the government is interested in other sections of the population statistics, disabled individuals’ statistics, children and adults, must be kept and regularly updated. Policies toward disabled people cannot lead to good results if beneficiaries number and characteristics are not known and taken into account. So, the government must set up disabled people identification mechanisms inspired by scientific researches done in the special education domain. Disabled people census must be conducted on the whole national territory, by well-trained agents in disabilities identification. This will provide precise statistics which are very essential for the policy towards disabled people. In addition, the government must set up disability or potential handicaps evaluation and identification mechanisms at birth. This will allow provision of early services which are known to have positive effects on the disabled children future life.

4. The last recommendation is on researchers. Researches must be conducted in special education area. This will offer a rigorous database which is necessary to be taken into account in preparing policies likely to render rights and dignity to disabled people in Burundi.

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