Assessment of the Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities in District Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring Frameworks: The Case of Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts for Fiscal Years 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inclusive governance is a central pillar of Rwanda's decentralization agenda, with national frameworks emphasizing "leaving no one behind," particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Districts are key in translating these commitments into action through planning, budgeting, and monitoring tools such as Imihigo and District Action Plans. However, existing evidence shows that inclusion is often addressed in principle rather than fully integrated into implementation, resource allocation, and accountability systems, resulting in uneven benefits for target groups. In response, this assessment examines how inclusion is operationalized in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts, focusing on whether it is reflected in concrete actions, responsive budgeting, and disaggregated monitoring over three fiscal years, while emphasizing that meaningful inclusion requires not only representation but also real influence, equitable access to resources, and tangible development outcomes

This assessment examines the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in district planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts for fiscal years 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026. The study focuses on how these specific groups are represented in governance structures, how their priorities are incorporated into District Development Strategies (DDS) and Imihigo, and how participation translates into meaningful empowerment and equitable benefits.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach combining a systematic desk review with key informant interviews, and the thematic and content analyses were used to assess inclusion in district planning and implementation.

Both districts have established formal structures for inclusion through the National Youth Council (NYC), National Women Council (NWC), and National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). These councils serve as recognized channels for women, youth, and PWDs to participate in district planning, decision-making, and monitoring processes. At the cell and sector levels, councils aggregate community priorities and transmit them to district authorities, ensuring structured engagement. District council meetings, Local Government Accountability Days, open days, and Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) reviews provide formal platforms for oversight and feedback.

Despite these institutional arrangements, meaningful participation remains uneven. In Nyamagabe District, challenges include limited training for youth representatives, high youth mobility, separation of youth Imihigo from district plans, the absence of YEGO centers, and limited sports and recreational activities. Women and PWDs face restricted empowerment opportunities and inadequate integration of locally identified priorities. Accessibility barriers and limited use of sign language and Braille materials reduce effective participation for PWDs. In Nyamasheke District, constraints include declining youth volunteerism, weak capacity-building programs, budget limitations, insufficient social and economic support for women and PWDs, and weak functionality of cell-level structures. Large-scale youth empowerment initiatives are included in Imihigo but are often not implemented due to funding gaps.

The review of district plans and Imihigo revealed that inclusion priorities are partially integrated. While centrally funded programs from MIGEPROF and MOYA ensure the implementation of some interventions, locally identified priorities of women, youth, and PWDs are inconsistently

reflected. Economic empowerment activities, such as MSME coaching, cooperative support, and assistive devices for PWDs, are the most consistently implemented interventions. Social, recreational, and cultural dimensions, particularly for youth, remain underdeveloped.

Emerging good practices and innovations provide a foundation for improving inclusion. These include institutionalized participation through NYC, NWC, and NCPD councils; use of accountability platforms (JADF, LG Accountability Days, open days) to engage specific groups; joint monitoring of Imihigo implementation; bottom-up mobilization of community priorities through cell and sector councils; targeted economic empowerment programs; and integration of measurable inclusion indicators in district planning frameworks.

To address existing gaps, targeted recommendations are proposed. District authorities should align Imihigo with district priorities, develop youth centers and recreational facilities, ensure accessibility for PWDs, conduct capacity-building for women and youth, and review the DDS to better integrate inclusion priorities. Central government (MIGEPROF, MOYA, MINALOC) should provide funding, policy guidance, and technical support for inclusion initiatives, enhance monitoring frameworks, and facilitate capacity-building. CCOIB and civil society partners should support YEGO centers, promote sports and recreational activities, organize peer learning exchanges among districts, provide mentorship and technical assistance, and advocate for accessibility and empowerment programs.

Overall, both districts demonstrate a strong policy commitment to inclusion with formal representation structures. However, translating representation into meaningful participation and equitable benefits remains limited due to capacity gaps, budget constraints, accessibility challenges, and weak integration of locally identified priorities. Leveraging emerging good practices, targeted capacity-building, and enhanced coordination between district authorities, central government, and partners is critical to achieving substantive, sustainable inclusion for women, youth, and PWDs.

While institutional mechanisms exist, the effectiveness of inclusion in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke depends on strengthened capacity, dedicated resources, and alignment of local priorities with district planning to ensure equitable outcomes for all specific.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Form
CCOAIB	Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base
DDS	District Development Strategy
FY	Fiscal Year
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GRB	Gender Responsive Budget
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
LG	Local Government
ILO	International labour Organization
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MOYA	Ministry of Youth and Arts
NCPD	National Council of Persons with Disabilities
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NEET	Not in Education. Employment or Training
NISR,	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NST2	National Strategy for Transformation 2
NWC	National Women Council
NYC	National Youth Council
OECD,	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Developmen
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PwDs	Persons with Disabilities
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNAB	Rwandan Organization of Women with Disabilities.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations
YEGO	Youth Empowerment for Global Opportunities.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Inclusive governance is a core principle of Rwanda's decentralization and development agenda. National development frameworks emphasize the commitment to "leaving no one behind," with particular attention to women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs), who have historically faced structural, social, and institutional barriers to participation in decision-making and equitable access to public services (Government of Rwanda, 2017; National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021). Within Rwanda's decentralized governance system, districts play a central role in translating national inclusion commitments into concrete priorities, actions, and measurable results through local planning, implementation, and monitoring instruments (Ministry of Local Government, Rwanda, 2021).

District-level instruments such as Imihigo performance contracts, District Action Plans, and implementation reports constitute the primary mechanisms through which local governments define development priorities, allocate responsibilities, guide budget execution, and report on results (Government of Rwanda, 2020). However, evidence from governance assessments and civil society monitoring indicates that inclusion considerations are often addressed at a declarative level, with limited integration into implementation logic, resource allocation, and accountability frameworks (Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; Rwanda Governance Board, 2023). As a result, the extent to which women, youth, and PwDs are meaningfully targeted and benefit from district-level development interventions remains uneven.

Against this backdrop, the assessment seeks to systematically evaluate how women, youth, and persons with disabilities are integrated into district planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts. The assessment goes beyond a review of policy statements or formal compliance with guidelines and examines whether inclusion is operationalized through concrete actions, responsive budgeting, targeted interventions, and disaggregated monitoring and reporting practices across the three fiscal years under review (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Rwanda, 2020).

The assignment is firmly anchored in the broader project objective of promoting inclusive governance through equitable participation of historically underrepresented groups. It recognizes that meaningful inclusion extends beyond representation to encompass influence over decision-making processes, access to public resources, and tangible development outcomes (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). Accordingly, the assessment focuses on both governance processes and substantive results, examining who participates, how decisions are made, and who ultimately benefits.

1.2 Rationale and Relevance of the Assessment

The assessment is grounded in the recognition that inclusive governance is a fundamental prerequisite for equitable and sustainable development. Despite progress in decentralization reforms, global and regional evidence demonstrates that marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) remain underrepresented in local planning processes

and underserved by public investments when inclusion is not deliberately mainstreamed across governance instruments (UNDP, 2016; World Bank, 2020).

In Rwanda, decentralization explicitly aims to enhance citizen participation, accountability, and responsiveness of local governments to diverse community needs. District-level instruments such as Imihigo performance contracts and District Action Plans are central to operationalizing national policy commitments. However, evidence indicates that inclusion commitments in policy frameworks do not automatically translate into meaningful participation or benefit for these groups (UN Women, 2018; OECD, 2019).

Women, youth, and persons with disabilities in Rwanda continue to face significant structural and institutional barriers that constrain their full participation in economic, social, and public life. Despite Rwanda's global leadership in women's representation with women holding approximately 63.8% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 2024, women's labor force participation has declined from 58.2% in 2020 to 52.2% in 2023, and women spend an average of 24 hours per week on unpaid care work, nearly double that of men, limiting their access to productive opportunities and leadership roles (NISR, 2024).

Youth inclusion challenges are also acute: 31% of Rwandan youth (aged 15–24) fall into the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) category, with higher rates among young women (36%) compared to young men (26%), reflecting barriers in access to education, skills training, and decent work (UN Women NEET Study, 2022). Persons with disabilities are estimated at around 3.4% of the population, and face compounded exclusion due to limited access to services, inadequate accommodations, and lower educational and employment opportunities, with women with disabilities experiencing particularly high school non-attendance and exclusion in governance and economic spheres (NISR, 2022; Africa Feature Network, 2025; UNABU, 2025). These barriers illustrate that, while policy frameworks for inclusive governance exist, actual access to resources, leadership, and responsive services remains uneven across groups, requiring targeted interventions and structural reforms.

Without intentional integration of inclusion considerations into planning, budgeting, and performance management systems, decentralized governance risks perpetuating existing inequalities rather than addressing them. Global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasize the principle of "leaving no one behind," requiring that development progress be assessed not only by aggregate results but also by the extent to which marginalized groups are reached, empowered, and able to influence development processes (United Nations, 2015; UNDP, 2016).

The assessment is highly relevant to Rwanda's national development agenda, which places social inclusion, equity, and citizen participation at the center of long-term transformation efforts. Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation II (NST2) highlight women, youth, and PwDs as central actors in socio-economic development, while the National Decentralization Policy assigns districts a clear mandate to operationalize these commitments through planning, implementation, and monitoring instruments (Government of Rwanda, 2020; MINALOC, 2021). District-level instruments, including Imihigo performance contracts, District Action Plans, Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks, and implementation reports, serve as the primary mechanisms through which national inclusion commitments are translated into locally defined priorities, targets, budgets, and reported results (MINECOFIN, 2021; MINALOC, 2019).

The assessment applies a structured, inclusion-focused analytical framework across four dimensions. First, representation and participation in district planning and decision-making assess whether women, youth, and PwDs are formally recognized as stakeholders and whether institutional arrangements exist to support their engagement (UNDP, 2015). Second, integration of gender, youth, and disability priorities evaluates whether district objectives, targets, and indicators reflect differentiated needs, vulnerabilities, and development constraints (World Bank, 2017; UN Women, 2018). Third, budget responsiveness and targeting examine whether financial allocations explicitly support inclusion priorities and align with stated commitments, drawing on gender-responsive and disability-inclusive budgeting principles (UN Women, 2018; ILO, 2019). Fourth, monitoring, reporting, and accountability assesses whether district reports systematically capture inclusion-related results through disaggregated data, qualitative analysis, and performance indicators (UNDP, 2016).

Applied consistently across districts and fiscal years, this framework generates robust, comparable evidence on progress, gaps, and patterns of inclusion. The assessment contributes to improving district planning and performance management, strengthens institutional learning, and provides civil society organizations, self-representing structures, and district authorities with actionable evidence to advance inclusive governance, equitable service delivery, and policy advocacy (Government of Rwanda, 2021; UNDP, 2015).

1.3 Objectives of the Assignment

The overall objective of the assignment is to assess and strengthen the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in district planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks in support of inclusive and equitable decentralized governance.
The specific objectives of the assignment are to:

a) Review district planning and performance instruments with an inclusion lens, focusing on women, youth, and persons with disabilities;
b) Assess how gender, youth, and disability priorities are reflected in planning, budgeting, and implementation processes;
c) Identify structural and practical gaps affecting equitable participation and access to benefits;
d) Generate actionable evidence to support advocacy, engagement, and capacity strengthening of civil society organizations and self-representing structures, including the National Women Council (NWC), National Youth Council (NYC), and National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD).

1.4 Scope of the Assignment

The assessment covers Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts and focuses on the 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026 fiscal years. The scope of work includes:

a) Review of Imihigo, District Action Plans, and implementation reports to assess inclusion across planning, implementation, and monitoring cycles;
b) Analysis of representation, participation, targeting mechanisms, and budget responsiveness for women, youth, and persons with disabilities;
c) Examination of reporting practices, including the use of disaggregated data and accountability mechanisms;

d) Synthesis of findings into evidence-based outputs aligned with advocacy and learning objectives of the project.

1.5 Key Questions Guiding the Analysis

The assessment will be guided by the following key evaluation and learning questions, which frame the analysis of inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities across district planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks:

a) To what extent are women, youth, and persons with disabilities explicitly reflected in district planning and performance instruments, including Imihigo, District Action Plans, and implementation reports?
b) How effectively do district plans and performance commitments translate inclusion priorities into concrete targets, interventions, and implementation arrangements?
c) To what degree are budget allocations and targeting mechanisms responsive to the specific needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities?
d) How are inclusion-related commitments monitored, reported, and accounted for within district performance and reporting systems?
e) What key gaps, good practices, and institutional constraints influence meaningful participation and equitable benefit for women, youth, and persons with disabilities at the district level?

1.6 Scope of Work and Coverage

The scope of this assignment is defined to ensure a focused, systematic, and evidence-based assessment of the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) within district planning, implementation, and monitoring frameworks.

(i) Thematically, the assessment examines the extent to which inclusion considerations are embedded across the full planning and performance management cycle at the district level, including District development strategies, intervention design, targeting mechanisms, budget allocations, and monitoring and reporting practices. Emphasis is placed on whether inclusion is operationalized through concrete actions with measurable outcomes rather than solely reflected in policy language.

(ii) The assignment covers a structured review of Imihigo performance contracts, District Action Plans, and district implementation and performance reports, assessing the coherence between planning, budgeting, and reporting processes. Geographically, the study is limited to Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts to enable an in-depth examination of institutional practices and contextual factors shaping inclusion within decentralized governance frameworks.

(iii) Temporally, the assessment spans three consecutive fiscal years: 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026 to analyze trends, continuity, and changes in inclusion practices over time. The study also engages key district-level stakeholders responsible for inclusion mandates, including officials in social affairs, governance, gender, youth, and disability, to validate findings and provide contextual clarity.

1.7 Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Profile

1.7.1 Nyamagabe District

Nyamagabe is situated in the South-West of the Southern Province. The District of Nyamagabe is one of the 8 Districts comprising the Southern Province. It is surrounded by the Districts of Karongi and Ruhango in the North, Nyanza and Huye inthe East, Nyaruguru in the South, Rusizi and Nyamasheke on the West. Nyamagabe District has 1090 Km2 subdivided into 17 administrative Sectors, 92 Cells and 536 Villages (Imidugudu). Nyamagabe District has an average altitude varying from 1800 to 2700 meters. It has uneven altitude with some summits going beyond 3000 meters high. The altitude and rainfall increase as one approaches the Congo-Nil Crater. Nyamagabe District relief is characterized by jagged and irregular slopes ranging from 60° to 120°, making soils susceptible to soil erosion and degradation

According to the 5th Rwanda population and housing census conducted in 2022, the population of Nyamagabe district is 371,501 (52.4 % are women) who live in 92,052 households, out of which 30.7% headed by women. In Nyamagabe, the youth share is approximately 24% of the district population, which is close to the national youth proportion of 27.1%, and 3.6% persons with disabilities

The share of women in the total population of the district is 52.4%. The density of the population in the district is strictly low, 441 Inhabitants per square Km. Analysing the age of the population, the youth population represents 28.6% of the entire population of the district, while the population aged 65 years and above represents 8.4%. Nyamagabe's population is predominantly rural: 89.1% of the resident population lives in rural areas compared to 10.9% in urban areas. The most populated sector is the Gasaka sector with 11% of the total population of the district (41,558 inhabitants), while the Mbazi sector is the least populated sector with 12,511 inhabitants

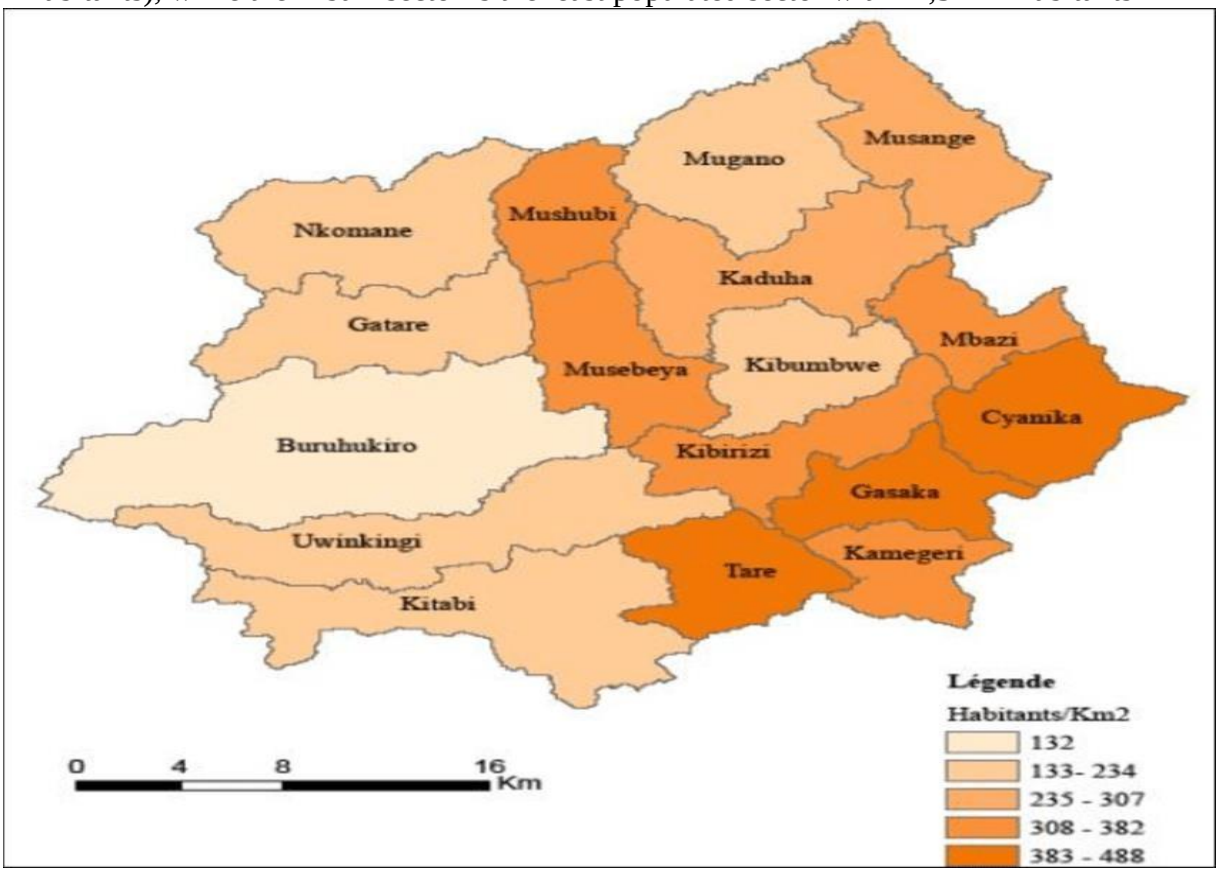


Figure 1. Nyamagabe Administrative map,2025

In Nyamagabe District, Nyungwe National Park is a tourist attraction with its fauna and flora rich in different animal and plant species. The district has an attractive tea plantation in Buruhukiro, Kitabi.

1.7.2 Nyamasheke District

Nyamasheke District is one of the seven districts of the Western Province of Rwanda. It borders Karongi District in the North, Rusizi District in the South, Nyamagabe District in the East, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the West. It has a surface area of 1,174 km², including 225.85 km² as part of Nyungwe National Park and 346.53 km² as part of Lake Kivu (Nyamasheke DDP, 2024-2029).

The district is subdivided into fifteen (15) administrative Sectors/Imirenge (Ruharambuga, Bushekeri, Bushenge, Cyato, Gihombo, Kagano, Kanjongo, Karambi, Karengera, Kirimbi, Macuba, Nyabitekeri, Mahembe, Rangiro and Shangi), 68 Cells and 588 Villages (Imidugudu).



Figure 2. Nyamasheke administrative map, 2025

According to the 5th Rwanda population and housing census conducted in 2022, the Nyamasheke population is 434,221(female: 229,363, males: 204,858), and 95,229 households. 33,377 are located in urban areas and 400,844 in rural areas**.** In Nyamasheke District**,** youth represent 24.1% of the total population, and 4.3% of the population aged 5 years and above live with a disability.

2 Conceptual and Analytical Framework

2.1 Understanding of Inclusive District Governance

Inclusive district governance in the Rwanda context refers to a system where all citizens, regardless of gender, age, disability, or socio-economic status, are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes and equitably benefit from public services and development outcomes. The Inclusion is anchored in internationally recognized principles of inclusive governance, rights-based development, and decentralized service delivery, which emphasize the active participation of all population groups in decision-making processes and equitable access to development opportunities (UNDP, 2015; World Bank, 2017). Inclusive governance goes beyond representation to ensure that development priorities, resources, and accountability mechanisms respond to the

differentiated needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, who have historically faced structural barriers to participation and benefit-sharing.

Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) identify women, youth, and persons with disabilities as central actors in Rwanda's socio-economic transformation, while the National Decentralization Policy assigns districts a clear mandate to operationalize these commitments through decentralized planning, implementation, and monitoring instruments (Government of Rwanda, 2020; Government of Rwanda, 2021).

It is grounded in Rwanda's decentralization policy, which empowers districts to plan and implement development through instruments such as District Development Strategies (DDS) and Imihigo performance contracts, while ensuring citizen participation, accountability, and responsiveness (Government of Rwanda, 2021) and decentralization acknowledge it as a potential enabler of inclusive development, as it brings planning, budgeting, and service delivery closer to citizens and creates space for locally responsive interventions (OECD, 2019). However, evidence from global and African contexts demonstrates that decentralization does not automatically result in inclusive outcomes unless inclusion is deliberately embedded within local planning systems, performance management frameworks, and accountability mechanisms (UNDP, 2016). Inclusion is therefore conceptualized as a core attribute of effective decentralized governance rather than a standalone or cross-cutting consideration.

At the district level in Rwanda, inclusive governance is reflected in the extent to which citizens are actively engaged in planning and priority-setting processes. This includes broad-based participation through community assemblies, village meetings, and structured citizen consultations, which enable local populations to articulate their needs and influence district development priorities (Government of Rwanda, 2013). Such participatory mechanisms are essential for ensuring that development interventions are context-specific and responsive to the realities of different communities. In addition, inclusive governance requires equitable access to essential services such as health, education, and social protection, ensuring that no group is left behind in the development process (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

Furthermore, inclusive governance at the district level emphasizes the representation and meaningful inclusion of Vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, in leadership and decision-making structures. Institutional frameworks such as councils and committees provide formal channels for these groups to participate in governance processes, although the effectiveness of their participation depends on the extent to which their voices influence final decisions (UNDP, 2021).

2.2 Legal and policy framework on inclusive governance

Rwanda's commitment to inclusive governance is constitutionally and legally enshrined, providing a strong foundation for the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in public decision-making. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees equality and non-discrimination (Articles 10, 11, and 16) and states that All Rwandans have the duty to participate in the development of the country through their dedication to work, safeguarding peace, democracy, equality, and social justice, as well as to participate in the defence of their country.

This constitutional framework is operationalized through policies such as the National Gender Policy, the National Youth Policy, and the National Disability Policy, which promote inclusive participation across governance processes. The decentralization framework led by the Ministry of Local Government, Rwanda, further mandates participatory planning and citizen engagement at all administrative levels (MINALOC, 2021). In this study, the consultant will check if the women, youth, and people with disabilities' numerical participation reflects the effective influence in shaping priorities

2.3 Analytical Framework for Inclusion Assessment

This analytical framework provides a structured approach for assessing the extent to which inclusive governance is embedded within planning, budgeting, and service delivery processes in Nyamasheke District and Nyamagabe District. Anchored in the decentralization framework of Rwanda, the assessment examines how effectively district systems promote participation, equity, representation, and responsiveness in line with national development priorities and local needs. It focuses on the alignment between District Development Strategies (DDS), Imihigo performance contracts, and district budgets, while evaluating whether these instruments translate inclusive policy commitments into tangible outcomes for all population groups, particularly vulnerable communities. The framework is designed to identify strengths, gaps, and practical entry points for strengthening inclusive governance at the district level.

2.3.1 Inclusion in Planning Processes

The planning process in Rwanda is a structured, multi-level, and participatory system that translates national development priorities into local actions. It is guided by overarching frameworks such as Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2), which provide strategic direction for sectoral and decentralized planning. These national priorities are localized through District Development Strategies (DDS), ensuring coherence between national goals and district-level interventions (Government of Rwanda, 2013; Government of Rwanda, 2021).

A key feature of Rwanda's planning process is its bottom-up, participatory nature, in which citizens contribute to identifying development priorities through community platforms such as village meetings (*Inteko z'Abaturage*). These priorities are consolidated from village to cell, sector, and ultimately district level, where they inform planning, budgeting, and the formulation of annual Imihigo performance contracts (Government of Rwanda, 2013). This approach promotes ownership, accountability, and responsiveness to local needs. Evidence from the Rwanda Governance Board shows that citizen participation in planning and budgeting reached 88.3% in the 12th Rwanda Governance Scorecard, reflecting strong engagement in these processes (RGB, 2025).

The process also integrates inclusion and equity considerations, ensuring that women, youth, and persons with disabilities participate through structured representation mechanisms and targeted consultations. In addition, planning is increasingly supported by data and evidence to guide priority setting and resource allocation. Draft plans undergo validation at different administrative levels to ensure alignment with both citizen priorities and national strategies.

This progress is largely attributed to coordinated efforts between government institutions, civil society organizations, and development partners in facilitating inclusive and structured citizen engagement processes conducted annually. These participatory processes, including community consultations and local planning forums, have strengthened citizens' voices in decision-making and enhanced the responsiveness of district plans and budgets to local needs. This participatory approach ensures that planning processes are not purely technocratic but reflect local realities, thereby enhancing ownership, accountability, and the relevance of District Development Strategies (DDS) and annual plans.

However, achieving meaningful inclusion requires more than participation alone; it also depends on how citizen inputs are integrated into decision-making and resource allocation. Rwanda's decentralization policy emphasizes the transfer of authority to local governments to improve responsiveness, equity, and service delivery outcomes. In practice, inclusive planning should therefore combine community consultations with institutional mechanisms such as elected councils, representation structures, and the use of disaggregated data to identify inequalities. While significant progress has been made in enhancing participation and representation, evidence suggests that gaps remain in ensuring that all groups, particularly vulnerable groups, fully influence final decisions and benefit equitably from development interventions.

2.3.2 Inclusion in Implementation Arrangements

Inclusion is well reflected in district planning documents, including District Development Strategies (DDS) and Imihigo, which consistently integrate considerations for women, youth, and persons with disabilities through targeted objectives, indicators, and planned interventions (document review). This demonstrates that inclusion is institutionally recognized and formally embedded within district priorities and planning frameworks.

Inclusion in implementation arrangements ensures that development programs are accessible, responsive, and beneficial to all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs). In Rwanda, district-level implementation frameworks anchored in District Development Strategies (DDS), Imihigo performance contracts, and sector-specific plans are responsive to different social, economic, and physical needs. In the Rwandan context, inclusion in implementation is closely linked to the country's decentralization policy, which empowers districts to operationalize national priorities locally while promoting citizen participation, accountability, and equity (Government of Rwanda, 2021; UNDP, 2021).

2.3.3 Inclusion in Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

Inclusive monitoring and accountability mechanisms ensure that development interventions are implemented transparently, equitably, and responsively, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs). These mechanisms are grounded in the decentralization policy, which emphasizes citizen engagement, social accountability, and participatory governance. Inclusion means that vulnerable groups can observe, assess, and influence how services are delivered and resources are allocated, ensuring that development outcomes address their specific needs (Government of Rwanda, 2012; UNDP, 2021

At the operational level, inclusion is achieved through structured platforms such as community meetings (Inteko z'Abaturage), Umuganda forums, etc., where specific groups can provide input

and evaluate service delivery. Institutionalized representation in district and sector oversight committees through women's councils, youth councils, and disability councils further ensures that these voices influence decisions on planning, resource allocation, and corrective actions. Accessibility measures, such as using local languages, visual tools, or Braille, and capacity-building initiatives, enhance meaningful participation by vulnerable populations (RGB, 2023).

Transparency and feedback mechanisms complement these efforts by informing communities how their inputs have shaped decisions, thereby strengthening trust and accountability. By combining representation, participatory tools, feedback loops, and capacity-building, Rwanda's monitoring and accountability systems aim to be both inclusive and effective. This approach ensures that development interventions are responsive to all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, and reinforces the broader goal of equitable, citizen-centered governance (UNDP, 2021; RGB, 2023).

2.3.4 Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Rwanda

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Rwanda is a planning and budgeting approach that ensures public resources are allocated and used in ways that promote gender equality and address the specific needs of women, men, youth, and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. GRB goes beyond equal funding on paper by analyzing how fiscal policies and resource distribution affect different genders and social groups. It is institutionalized under the National Gender Policy and the Organic Budget Law, which requires all ministries, districts, and public institutions to prepare Gender Budget Statements demonstrating how budget allocations contribute to advancing gender equality and inclusion objectives (Republic of Rwanda, Revised National Gender Policy, 2021).

At the national level, the implementation of GRB involves conducting gender analysis during the planning stage to identify the priorities and needs of women, youth, and vulnerable populations. Budget allocations are then designed to fund targeted interventions such as women's economic empowerment, youth skills development, social protection programs, and improved access to essential services. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms track whether these resources reach the intended groups and achieve the expected outcomes. Key institutions, including MINECOFIN, MIGEPROF, and the Gender Monitoring Office, coordinate and oversee the integration of gender considerations into public financial management (PEFA, 2022).

At the district level, Gender-Responsive Budgeting is reflected in Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe through the allocation of resources to programs targeting women, youth, and persons with disabilities. District plans and Imihigo include interventions such as women's economic empowerment, youth skills development, and social protection for vulnerable groups, with assigned budget lines and performance indicators. However, district officials note that allocations are sometimes insufficient to meet the full needs identified during planning, and some interventions experience delays or limited coverage in remote areas. Enhancing local capacity, ensuring timely and adequate funding, and improving monitoring of gender-specific outcomes are essential to make GRB more effective and ensure that vulnerable groups benefit meaningfully from district development programs.

2.4 Dimension analysis

2.4.1 Representation and Participation

This dimension examines the extent to which specific groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) are meaningfully represented and engaged in planning, decision-making, and oversight structures at the district and sector levels. The analysis will assess whether these groups have formal roles in councils, committees, and community platforms, and whether their views influence the prioritization and implementation of development programs. This analysis helped determine whether inclusion is procedural or substantive.

2.4.2 Targeting and Responsiveness

This dimension focuses on whether programs and interventions are designed and implemented to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups. The analysis will assess the effectiveness of targeting mechanisms and whether service delivery is responsive to the priorities identified by marginalized populations. This dimension evaluates whether planning and implementation are citizen-centered and sensitive to diversity.

2.4.3 Budget Sensitivity and Equity

This dimension evaluates how financial resources are allocated to ensure equity and inclusion, specifically for vulnerable populations. The analysis will examine the extent to which district budgets prioritize interventions that benefit women, youth, and PwDs, and whether resource distribution is aligned with identified needs. This analysis helps identify gaps between policy commitments and actual resource distribution for inclusion.

2.5 Methodological Approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach combining a systematic desk review with key informant interviews to assess inclusion in district planning and implementation.

2.5.1 Interview

The assessment primarily relied on key informant interviews with district staff and representatives of youth, women, and persons with disabilities who are directly involved in district governance and planning processes. Primary data were collected through interviews with approximately 18 key informants from both districts, including district officials, coordinators of national councils (women, youth, and persons with disabilities),.

This approach was deliberately chosen to generate in-depth, experience-based insights on both the design and implementation of inclusion measures, particularly from actors responsible for decision-making and service delivery. While the inclusion of focus group discussions with community members and beneficiaries could have further enriched the findings, the study mitigated this limitation by ensuring diversity among respondents and triangulating perspectives across different categories of stakeholders. In addition, representatives of target groups (youth, women, and persons with disabilities) were not only interviewed as administrative actors but also as direct voices of inclusion constituencies. Regarding sampling, purposive selection was applied to target respondents with relevant knowledge and responsibilities, which is appropriate for qualitative inquiry; however, the study acknowledges the potential for bias and therefore interpreted findings with caution, emphasizing patterns and converging evidence rather than generalization.

2.5.2 Secondary data

The assessment made use of secondary data through a comprehensive and systematic desk review, although this was not sufficiently elaborated in the initial report. Specifically, Section 2.5.3 involved a detailed review of key district-level documents, including District Development Strategies (DDS) for Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke, District Imihigo and their evaluation reports, district-approved budgets and budget execution reports, as well as Gender Budget Statements (GBS).

At the national level, the desk review also covered key policy and guiding frameworks for alignment analysis, including the National Gender Policy, National Youth Policy, National Council of Persons with Disabilities Strategic Plan, National Decentralization Policy, and the National Strategy for Transformation. This review aimed to examine how women, youth, and persons with disabilities are reflected in policy commitments, targets, and interventions.

While this desk review provided a strong foundational understanding of the formal inclusion framework at both district and national levels, it is acknowledged that the analytical linkage between consultation priorities and those ultimately retained in the DDS was not sufficiently highlighted in the report. To strengthen the evidence, the analysis will be further refined to explicitly compare consultation outcomes with adopted priorities, as well as to incorporate additional documentation such as lists of consultation participants and evidence of stakeholder participation in the implementation of selected Imihigo projects.

The study ensured triangulation between primary data and documentary evidence, and future revisions will make this integration more explicit and analytically robust.

2.5.3 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic (content) analysis approach. Findings from the desk review were systematically analysed and triangulated with insights from key informants to identify recurring patterns, gaps, and good practices. This triangulation enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings by cross-verifying evidence from multiple sources, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the inclusion of women, youth, and PwDs across planning, resource allocation, implementation, and accountability dimensions

3 Findings: Inclusion of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities

3.1 Inclusion in District Planning Frameworks

To assess the extent to which women, youth, and persons with disabilities are explicitly reflected in district planning and performance instruments, including Imihigo, District Action Plans, and implementation reports, this section is guided by the question of whether the diverse voices are involved in the district planning framework of Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe Districts.

3.1.1 Nyamasheke District

Women, Youth, and PWD as specific groups are part of the planning process. During the process of identification of local priorities for district planning and the development of Imihigo, they are

invited to participate like other citizens as part of the commitment to the principle of "leaving no one behind."

This was confirmed by the district officials during the interview held on 05/03/2026, who stated that Youth, women, and PWD attend the planning consultation and provide their priorities. Interviews with officials in the planning unit revealed that participation among these groups is uneven and indicated that women participate more actively compared to youth and persons with disabilities.

The district staff said that during the discussions in the planning consultations, women and youth provide tangible priorities in general, and the priorities to empower them. The representatives of the specific groups in the interview also revealed that even if they provide those tangible priorities to empower them, they are not translated into District Imihigo. They further stressed that the interventions reflected in Imihigo largely originate from line ministries and typically focus on supporting start-ups and existing MSMEs owned by youth and women, coaching beneficiaries to develop bankable projects and access financing, providing assistive devices, and supporting cooperatives for persons with disabilities and their priorities.

The district staff argued that the identification of local needs and priorities should be more specific. They explained that when local priorities are treated in a general manner, the particular needs of specific groups may be left out. They therefore recommended that the district should establish clearly defined priorities for women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to ensure more effective and inclusive planning.

However, the inclusion of these interventions does not necessarily translate into meaningful empowerment of youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Evidence from interviews with representatives of these groups stated that their own Imihigo commitments(Mutima w'urugo and Youth Imihigo) are not incorporated into the official Imihigo document signed between the President of the Republic and the District Mayor. Representatives from the National Youth Council and the National Women's Council indicated that although they develop plans and commitments aimed at empowering youth and women, these initiatives often lack the necessary budget allocations for implementation. As a result, many of these commitments remain largely aspirational and exist mainly on paper, with limited practical realization at the community level.

In addition, it was observed that the National Council of Persons with Disabilities at the district level does not have a specific Imihigo dedicated to advancing the empowerment of persons with disabilities. This gap further limits the institutionalization of targeted actions and accountability mechanisms for addressing the specific needs and priorities of PWDs within district development and performance frameworks.

The district staff reported varying levels of participation of different social groups in planning sessions. According to the information provided, the participation rate of persons with disabilities (PWDs) is approximately 5%, while youth participation is around 70%, and women's participation exceeds 80%. The staff member explained that the particularly low attendance of PWDs is attributed to several structural and contextual factors.

One of the major factors is topography and physical accessibility. Nyamasheke District is characterized by a mountainous terrain, which creates significant mobility challenges for persons with disabilities. For example, when planning meetings are organized at Cell offices located on hilltops, many PWDs are effectively excluded due to the difficulty of reaching these locations, as explained by one of the representatives of PWD in the council.

Empirical studies and civil society reports indicate that actual participation of youth, women, and PWDs in planning forums is relatively low, and identified priorities are not always translated into concrete, well-resourced interventions (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021; Transparency International Rwanda, 2022). Structural, social, and capacity-related barriers further limit effective engagement of specific groups (United Nations Development Programme, 2023; Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives, 2022).

3.1.2 Nyamagabe District

The review of planning documents reveals that in Nyamagabe District, the inclusion of women, youth, and PWD in district planning is considered, and these groups are part of the planning process from the planning consultations to the monitoring and evaluation. An interview with a District official indicated that women, youth, and persons with disabilities actively participate in the planning process, particularly in identifying local development priorities.

District staff also revealed that several tangible priorities raised by women, such as job creation, establishing a women's center, and improving access to water and energy, were considered during the planning process. Similarly, youth actively participated by expressing their development needs, including the construction of the Gasarenda road and the renovation of Nyagisenyi Stadium. These contributions demonstrate that the inputs of women and youth were considered in identifying local development priorities.

Representatives of these groups at the district level indicated that most interventions aimed at their empowerment are largely determined by the central government. According to the interviewee, such interventions are typically incorporated into district *Imihigo* as part of nationally driven programs, rather than originating directly from priorities identified at the local level

They consistently described these empowerment interventions as largely routine activities, as they tend to remain unchanged across fiscal years. The review revealed that the same types of interventions are implemented in the assessed districts with relatively similar budget allocations, suggesting limited contextual adaptation to the specific needs or priorities of each district. This pattern indicates that while participatory mechanisms exist at the local level, the scope for districts to design context-specific empowerment initiatives for women, youth, and persons with disabilities remains constrained.

The district staff also reported different levels of participation among specific groups during district planning sessions. According to the information provided, the participation rate is about 20% for persons with disabilities (PWDs), around 60% for youth, and above 70% for women. For example, during the Citizen Participation Month, most recently launched in October 2025 in Kibilizi Sector, overall participation reached 70.4%, indicating a relatively strong level of community engagement in local planning processes. Women were identified as the most active participants, consistently attending and contributing to discussions.

Youth and persons with disabilities further participate in the planning process, although their engagement often occurs through their respective representative structures, such as the National Youth Council (NYC) and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). While these institutional channels facilitate their involvement, the planning unit noted that their direct participation and voice in village assemblies and open community meetings are still gradually improving.

Regarding the low attendance rate of persons with disabilities (PWDs), the consulted District staff highlighted topography and physical accessibility as major constraints. Nyamagabe District is characterized by mountainous terrain, which creates significant mobility challenges for PWDs. When planning meetings are organized at Cell offices located on hilltops, many persons with disabilities are excluded due to the physical difficulty of reaching these venues.

For youth participation, several factors were identified as limiting consistent engagement. Consulted staff pointed out the high mobility and instability among youth, as many frequently relocate in search of employment or educational opportunities. In addition, the format and nature of traditional planning meetings were perceived as less engaging for young people, which reduces their motivation to attend. Other contributing factors include low levels of volunteerism, limited capacity to effectively fulfill representative roles, and a tendency among some youth to prioritize personal interests over community participation.

It was also observed that youth tend to participate more actively in entertainment and recreational activities rather than formal meetings. However, they suggested that introducing incentive-based approaches, such as competitions or recognition awards linked to youth and PWD engagement in government programs, could increase motivation and participation. During the interviews, representatives of youth, women, and persons with disabilities emphasized the importance of capacity-building initiatives, particularly in entrepreneurship, project planning, and leadership for job creation, to strengthen their ability to participate meaningfully in planning processes and contribute effectively to local development initiatives.

Therefore, the extent to which women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are participating in district planning and performance instruments may be described as moderate but improving. The district staff witnessed that even during the planning consultations at the cell level, they are invited and they are among the participants.

The participation of youth in the planning process can be affected by several factors. The district staff indicated that limited empowerment opportunities remain a major constraint to youth participation and development. The absence of a YEGO Center limits opportunities for effective youth empowerment in the district.

They explained that many young people tend to prefer entertainment activities over attending meetings, suggesting that this affects their engagement in development initiatives. They further emphasized that sports activities and competitions could serve as effective entry points to mobilize and engage youth more actively. In conclusion, they highlighted that Nyamagabe District requires more tangible interventions to strengthen the empowerment of youth and persons with disabilities, including targeted capacity-building initiatives and the effective operationalization of the National Youth Council and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities at the local level.

The declining volunteerism spirit among youth is increasingly replaced by financial interest or incentives, as indicated by the district staff.

However, empirical studies and civil society reports indicate that gaps persist. Many invited participants from youth, women, and PWD groups do not consistently attend or actively engage in planning forums due to low awareness, social norms, accessibility challenges, and competing responsibilities (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021; Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives, 2022).

The analysis of Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe Districts shows that the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in district planning is present but remains moderate and uneven. While both Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke districts demonstrate strong institutional commitment to inclusion through the integration of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in key planning instruments such as the DDS and Imihigo, the assessment finds that the *quality of this inclusion varies*. Beyond the presence of these groups in planning documents, the critical issue is the extent to which their priorities effectively shape district decisions and translate into concrete, actionable commitments.

Analysis of planning documents and interview findings indicates that, although consultation mechanisms and representative structures are in place, their influence on final district priorities is not always evident. In several instances, priorities expressed by these groups during consultations are only partially reflected in the adopted plans or are incorporated without clear indicators, dedicated budgets, or implementation strategies. This suggests a gap between formal representation and meaningful participation.

For both Districts, while the analysis confirms that women, youth, and persons with disabilities are consistently reflected in district planning documents, including DDS and Imihigo, the quality of this inclusion varies and requires further examination. Beyond their formal mention, it is important to assess the extent to which the priorities of these groups genuinely influence district decision-making processes and resource allocation.

Findings from both document review and stakeholder consultations suggest that, in many cases, inclusion remains largely procedural. Although representative structures exist and these groups are formally consulted during planning processes, their inputs are not always systematically integrated into final district priorities or translated into concrete, adequately resourced commitments (interview findings). This indicates that participation often occurs at a consultative level rather than at a level where it meaningfully shapes outcomes.

While planning documents include general references to specific groups, they do not always clearly articulate specific needs, targeted interventions, or measurable indicators that reflect the distinct priorities of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (document review). As a result, inclusion risks being treated as a compliance requirement rather than as a driver of equitable service delivery.

This suggests that the presence of inclusive language and structures, although important, is not sufficient on its own. Greater emphasis is needed on ensuring that participation is substantive and that the expressed priorities of these groups are translated into actionable, budgeted, and monitorable commitments. Strengthening this link between representation, voice, and decision-

making is critical to improving the overall effectiveness and impact of inclusive planning at the district level.

Furthermore, while inclusion is recognized at the policy and planning level, its operationalization remains uneven, with limited evidence that the specific needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities consistently inform resource allocation and performance targets. Strengthening the link between consultation outcomes, planning decisions, and implementation commitments is therefore essential to ensure that inclusion moves beyond formal recognition to substantive impact.

However, the findings also reveal that participation in planning does not consistently translate into meaningful influence on district priorities and resource allocation. In both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe, many of the interventions targeting women, youth, and persons with disabilities originate from nationally guided programs rather than from locally identified priorities expressed during planning consultations.

As a result, several priorities raised by these groups are not systematically integrated into Imihigo commitments or supported by adequate budget allocations. While the districts demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusive planning in line with the principle of "leaving no one behind," the overall evidence suggests that participation remains largely consultative rather than transformative, with limited institutionalization of the proposals and commitments generated by these groups. Strengthening feedback mechanisms, improving accessibility and capacity-building, and ensuring that citizen inputs are better reflected in district planning and budgeting processes will be essential to deepen meaningful participation and achieve more inclusive local development outcomes.

3.2 Integration of Women, Youth, and People with Disabilities Priorities in District Development Strategies

This section examines the extent to which district plans and performance commitments operationalize inclusion priorities into clear, actionable elements. It assesses whether the needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities are translated into specific targets, well-defined interventions, and practical implementation arrangements, including assigned responsibilities, timelines, and resource allocation. The analysis also considers the consistency between stated inclusion objectives and actual planned activities, in order to determine whether commitments move beyond policy intentions to deliver tangible and measurable outcomes.

3.2.1 Nyamasheke District

The review revealed limited integration of locally identified priorities into the District Imihigo. Instead, most of the interventions included in Imihigo related to youth and women's empowerment originate from central government institutions, particularly the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and the Ministry of Youth and Arts (MOYA), as detailed below in Table 1. These activities are incorporated into the district Imihigo primarily because the ministries provide dedicated budgets to support their implementation. While other activities, such as the promotion of the activities of the National Youth Council (NYC), the National Women's Council (NWC), and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), as well as meetings and sports promotion, were reflected in the detailed action plan and corresponding budget.

Although the National Youth Council and the National Women's Council at the district level prepare their own Imihigo commitments, many of these planned activities remain unimplemented due to the lack of dedicated budget allocations, as they are not integrated into District Imihigo. *One of the members of the coordination of the National Women's Council at the district level said that* there is no integration of identified interventions for women's empowerment in Imihigo and district planning documents in Nyamasheke District. The integration is done for only the routine activities from MIGEPROF and MOYA, and other activities related to the functioning of NWC, NYC, and NCPD are integrated in the detailed action plan.

The district officer in charge of youth indicated that most activities aimed at empowering youth are included in their *Imihigo/Commitment of the National Youth Council at the district level*, but are not supported by a specific budget. As a result, their implementation remains limited. This situation presents an opportunity for districts to more systematically integrate and adequately budget youth-focused *Imihigo* in order to promote sustainable youth empowerment.

However, a notable gap exists in the omission of interventions aimed at youth empowerment through sports and cultural development. While such activities may be included in broader district action plans (e.g., construction of playgrounds or youth centers), their absence in Imihigo limits their visibility, prioritization, and performance tracking. Consequently, this calls for more comprehensive integration of all youth development dimensions within performance contracts (Nyamasheke District, 2024/2025). The table below indicates the routine activities across the years in Nyamasheke DDS and Imihigo.

Table 1 Priorities targeting specific groups outlined in DDS and Imihigo

Planning Document / Fiscal Year	Key Inclusion Priorities	Operational Interventions / Activities	Observations / Gaps
DDS 2018–2024	Increased productive jobs for youth and women; skills development for PWDs	Planning of income-generating activities and training for youth; support for PWDs	Inclusion priorities are clearly stated and mainstreamed; strong alignment with economic empowerment goals
Imihigo 2023/2024	Youth, women, and PWD empowerment	Coaching start-ups and existing MSMEs owned by youth, women, and PWDs; support for PWD cooperatives; provision of assistive devices	Strong translation of DDS outcomes into actionable interventions; budgeted and operationalized
DDS 2024–2029	Institutionalized inclusion under the Transformational Governance pillar	Outcome 1.2: % of youth-, women-, and PWD-led organizations engaged in planning; Outcome 1.3: % citizen participation and inclusiveness	Shift from program-based to systemic inclusion; measurable governance outcomes
Imihigo 2024/2025	Youth, women, and PWD empowerment	Coaching and financing MSMEs for youth and women; assistive devices for PWDs; financial support to PWD cooperatives	Partial integration; gap in social, cultural, and recreational youth interventions (e.g.,

			playgrounds, youth centers); limits visibility and tracking
Imihigo 2025/2026	Continuity of inclusion-focused interventions	MSMEs coached for finance; assistive devices for PWDs; PWD cooperatives supported	Continuity maintained; youth empowerment remains mostly economic; need to expand to social, cultural, and recreational dimensions

Source: Priorities targeting a specific group outlined in DDS and Imihigo.

3.2.2 Nyamagabe

The review indicated that the District Development Strategy (DDS) of Nyamagabe District includes strategic interventions to empower women, youth, and persons with disabilities. These interventions reflect the district's commitment to promoting inclusive development and ensuring that specific groups benefit from local development programs.

However, an analysis of the district's Imihigo performance contracts across the assessed fiscal years reveals that most activities related to these groups remain largely routine and repetitive, with similar interventions appearing consistently from one fiscal year to the next, as summarized in the table below. This pattern suggests limited innovation or adaptation of empowerment initiatives to emerging local needs, as summarized in the table below.

The representatives of youth and women in the interview reported that most of the activities incorporated into the District Imihigo originate from directives and programs initiated by MIGEPROF and MOYA, which also provide the associated implementation budgets. As a result, the commitments and priorities identified by youth and women themselves are often not reflected in the official district Imihigo. Instead, many of these locally developed commitments are implemented informally through self-initiative and voluntary contributions, rather than through structured district planning and budgeting mechanisms, as clearly highlighted by one of the NYC members at the district level.

This situation highlights a gap between the strategic intentions outlined in the DDS and the practical integration of locally driven empowerment priorities within the district's performance framework

The district staff from the Social Unit noted that, at times, activities aimed at empowering persons with disabilities (PWDs) are planned but not supported by a dedicated budget. This highlights the need to allocate more resources in the district budget for initiatives that genuinely empower PWDs, as providing assistive devices alone does not equate to economic empowerment. He also raised the issue of limited capacity in the use of sign language, which hinders effective communication and inclusion

Table 2 Priorities targeting specific groups outlined in DDS and Imihigo

Planning Document / Fiscal Year	Youth Priorities	Women Priorities	PWD Priorities	Notes / Gaps

DDS 2018–2024	Creation of 1,250 off-farm jobs; training programs for skills development	Inclusion in hands-on skills programs outside formal education	Hands-on skills programs outside formal education	Focus on economic empowerment and skills; limited tracking mechanisms
Imihigo 2023/2024	Start-up & existing MSMEs coached to develop bankable projects and access finance	Start-up & existing MSMEs coached and financed	Provision of assistive devices to new beneficiaries; 4 PWD cooperatives financially supported	Strong alignment with DDS; good operationalization; inclusion in budget lines
DDS 2024–2029	Identification of income-generating activities (IGAs)	Identification of IGAs	Support for PWD-led IGAs	Emphasis on mainstreaming marginalized groups; planning-focused outcomes
Imihigo 2024/2025	Start-up & existing MSMEs coached and financed	Start-up & existing MSMEs coached and financed	Assistive devices for new PWDs; financial support to 4 PWD cooperatives	Direct translation of DDS priorities into concrete interventions
Imihigo 2025/2026	Start-up & existing MSMEs coached to access finance (not disaggregated)	MSMEs coached (not disaggregated)	Assistive devices for vulnerable PWDs; PWD cooperatives financially supported	Lack of disaggregated data; limits monitoring of specific subgroups; continued focus on economic empowerment

Source: *Priorities targeting a specific group outlined in DDS and Imihigo*

Both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe districts rely heavily on centrally funded programs to integrate youth, women, and PWD priorities, with economic empowerment emphasized and locally identified priorities often not implemented. While Nyamagabe shows stronger alignment between its DDS and *Imihigo*, routine interventions dominate in both districts, highlighting the need for more budgeted, locally driven, and inclusive strategies.

While the report confirms that inclusion priorities are reflected in district plans, the extent to which these priorities are translated into actual service delivery remains uneven. Evidence from interviews and document review indicates that only a subset of planned inclusion-related interventions are fully implemented, and in many cases, implementation is partial or inconsistent across sectors and districts.

Specifically, some interventions, such as support to vulnerable households, training of women and youth representatives, and community engagement initiatives, have been implemented, often with support from central government programs or development partners (interview findings). However, several planned actions, particularly those requiring dedicated budgets or technical capacity, were either not implemented or only partially executed. This includes targeted economic empowerment initiatives, disability-specific infrastructure improvements, and sustained engagement mechanisms for marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that implementation does not equally benefit all target groups. Women's inclusion tends to be more systematically addressed due to existing national frameworks, while interventions targeting youth and persons with disabilities are less consistently operationalized (interview findings). This uneven implementation reflects differences in institutional prioritization, availability of earmarked resources, and clarity of implementation

Table 3. Implementation Status of Inclusion Priorities

Target Group	Priority Identified	Planned Intervention	Budgeted (Yes/No)	Implemented (Yes/Partial/No)	Key Constraint
Women	Economic empowerment	Support to women cooperatives	Yes	Partial	Limited funding and market access
Youth	Employment creation	Skills training programs	Yes	Yes	Limited coverage
PWDs	Accessibility	Public infrastructure adaptation	No	No	Lack of a dedicated budget
Youth	Participation	Engagement in decision-making forums	No	Partial	Weak follow-up mechanisms

Source: Consultant's compilation

A key gap identified is the limited linkage between planning, budgeting, and execution. In several cases, inclusion priorities are articulated in planning documents but are not matched with dedicated budgets, resulting in limited or no implementation (document review). In addition, weak monitoring and reporting systems constrain the ability of districts to track progress and assess whether planned interventions effectively reach intended beneficiaries.

Overall, this suggests that while inclusion is formally integrated into planning frameworks, its operationalization in practice remains constrained by resource limitations, capacity gaps, and insufficient follow-through mechanisms. Strengthening the alignment between planning, budgeting, and implementation, as well as improving tracking of results across target groups, is essential to ensure that inclusion commitments translate into tangible outcomes.

3.3 Representation and participation of Women, Youth, and PwDs in Planning Processes

This dimension assesses how effectively women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) are represented and actively involved in planning, decision-making, and oversight at district and sector levels. It examines their formal participation in councils, committees, and community platforms, as well as the extent to which their contributions shape development priorities and implementation. The analysis ultimately distinguishes whether inclusion is merely procedural or genuinely substantive.

3.3.1 Nyamasheke District

In Nyamasheke District, the identification of local development priorities is conducted through participatory planning forums where all citizens are invited, including youth, women, and people

with disabilities (PWDs). Their representation is institutionalized through structured governance bodies that operate across administrative levels. At the cell level, youth are represented by the Cell Youth Council committee, women by the Cell Women Council committee, and PWDs by elected representatives affiliated with the National Council of Persons with Disabilities.

At the sector level, these structures are consolidated into Sector Youth Councils, Sector Women Councils, and Sector-level PWD committees, which aggregate priorities from cells. At the district level, representation is ensured through the National Youth Council at the District level, National Women Council at the District level, and National Council of Persons with Disabilities at the District level, which formally participate in planning discussions and provide inputs into DDS and Imihigo processes(MINALOC, 2021; National Youth Council, 2013).

The district staff said that the planning and decision-making processes are inclusive, ensuring that women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are represented to the extent possible. Even if they have their own specific councils, they are among the District councillors that approve all planning and budgeting documents and take part in the entire decision-making processes.

However, while this multi-level representation provides a strong institutional mechanism for inclusion, actual participation in Nyamasheke remains mixed. In practice, representatives from these councils are invited to planning meetings, but their effective engagement may be limited by capacity gaps, limited preparation, and challenges in consolidating views from their constituencies. (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021; Transparency International Rwanda, 2022).

Moreover, participation often occurs through these formal representatives rather than direct involvement of all group members, which may reduce the diversity of perspectives captured. As a result, although the structural framework ensures representation at the cell, sector, and district levels, strengthening feedback loops, capacity building, and facilitation mechanisms is essential to translate representation into meaningful influence on district priorities.

During the interview, one of the District executive committee members concluded that Nyamasheke District has made considerable progress in ensuring representation**,** especially for women and youth, while PWD participation remains an area that needs further strengthening. The district continues to work on enhancing consultative mechanisms, increasing accessibility, and systematically integrating the voices of these groups into planning and decision-making**.**

3.3.2 Nyamagabe District

Similarly, in Nyamagabe District, inclusion in the identification of local priorities is anchored in a structured system of representation for women, youth, and PWDs across all administrative levels. At the cell level, elected committees for youth and women engage with community members to identify needs. These priorities are then transmitted to the sector level, where Sector Youth Councils, Sector Women Councils, and PWD committees harmonize inputs across cells. At the district level, the District Youth Council, District Women Council, and District Council of Persons with Disabilities participate in district-wide planning processes, ensuring that grassroots priorities inform DDS and Imihigo. This vertical integration is supported by national institutional frameworks coordinated by the National Youth Council, National Women Council, and National Council of Persons with Disabilities, under the broader decentralization and participation policy led by the Ministry of Local Government (Ministry of Local Government, 2021).

District staff also revealed that women, youth, and PWDs are important groups in the planning process, and efforts are made to reflect their needs in district planning, Imihigo, and monitoring frameworks. The representatives of youth, women, and PWDs noted that their presence is more visible during approval processes, while the participation of the group they represent in the actual planning stages remains limited. A district leader who attended the meetings confirmed that the representatives of women, youth, and PWD are actively engaged when matters concerning their specific interests are discussed. However, District staff and Women, Youth, and PWD representatives confirmed that the NYC and NWC at the Cell level, as well as the NCPD at the Cell level, are largely non-functional, whereas at the Sector level they are somewhat active and operational.

Nevertheless, despite these well-established structures, empirical evidence shows that participation in Nyamagabe is not always fully effective. Attendance and active engagement of youth, women, and PWD representatives can be constrained by factors such as limited awareness, accessibility barriers, and social norms that affect voice and influence in decision-making spaces. As a result, while representation is institutionally guaranteed, the gap between formal inclusion and meaningful participation persists (United Nations Development Programme, 2023; Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives, 2022).

For both Districts, during the approval of Imihigo at all administrative levels, youth, women, and people with disabilities (PWDs) participate through formal council structures responsible for validating planning documents before implementation.

At the sector level**,** Imihigo are reviewed and approved by the Sector Council, while at the district level**,** they are validated by the District Council. Within these councils, representatives of youth, women, and PWDs channeled through structures such as the National Youth Council, National Women Council, and National Council of Persons with Disabilities actively participate in discussions and decision-making processes. They contribute to reviewing priorities, ensuring that inclusion considerations are reflected, and endorsing the final Imihigo commitments. This process is grounded in the decentralization and participatory governance framework led by the Ministry of Local Government, which mandates inclusive representation in local councils. As a result, the involvement of these groups in Sector and District Council approval meetings strengthens accountability, ownership, and inclusiveness of Imihigo before they are implemented.

One member of the National Youth Council at the district level revolves around transforming youth from "numbers in a meeting" into "planners of the budget." He stated that youth in Nyamagabe are often absent from traditional planning sessions, not due to apathy, but due to structural misalignment, and most youth in Nyamagabe are engaged in informal trade or tea/coffee farming. Planning meetings at the Cell level usually coincides with working hours.

The coordinator of the National Council of People with Disabilities argued that the insights should focus on shifting from "welfare" to "rights-based" inclusion. Their perspective is that while budget numbers for social protection are high, the quality of life for PWDs depends on physical and digital accessibility. He pointed out that low attendance in planning sessions is often a failure of logistics, not interest, and Nyamagabe is mountainous. The coordinator has noted that many village assembly points are inaccessible for those with mobility impairments.

He recommended that the district either provide transport facilitation for PWD representatives or move the "Imihigo consultation" to the nearest accessible public building (like a school or health center). Lack of sign language interpreters and Braille materials at the cell and the Sector level makes planning sessions "silent" for many, leading to the recommendation that every Sector should have at least one staff member trained in basic sign language.

It was observed that both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe districts have formal structures to represent youth, women, and PWDs, but meaningful participation varies. Nyamasheke shows stronger engagement, especially for women and youth, while PWDs face accessibility and capacity challenges. In Nyamagabe, cell-level participation is weak due to logistical barriers, with these groups mostly visible only during approval of *Imihigo*, highlighting the need for improved facilitation and inclusive planning mechanisms.

3.4 Inclusion in Implementation Arrangements

Assessing the accessibility and responsiveness of district programs is essential to understanding the extent to which inclusion priorities for women, youth, and persons with disabilities are translated into practice. This section examines whether interventions are practically accessible, address the specific needs of target groups, and are responsive to their priorities, highlighting both achievements and gaps in implementation arrangements.

3.4.1 Targeting of Inclusive Interventions

In Nyamasheke District, activities aimed at responding to the needs and empowering youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are limited within the district *Imihigo*. The review indicated that the focus consists mainly of meetings, consultations, and support for national councils. Larger initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship, skills development, the construction of playgrounds, and youth centers are often absent because they require substantial budgets that the district does not have. As a result, the district primarily implements activities provided by MIGEPROF, MOYA, and other central institutions, which are incorporated into the action plan and, in some cases, may not be fully *executed*.

A planning unit officer noted that Imihigo are seen as the mechanism where funding is most likely to be secured, whether from the central government or partners. Other activities without dedicated budgets are included in the action plan but face implementation challenges. The officer in charge of youth highlighted that those activities specifically aimed at youth empowerment are very limited; although many appear in the youth Imihigo, they often remain unimplemented due to a lack of funding, including initiatives for disadvantaged youth and recreational facilities.

Similarly, a representative of persons with disabilities explained that providing assistive devices alone does not constitute empowerment. Meaningful inclusion requires activities that enable PWDs to actively participate in social, recreational, and personal development opportunities, adapted to their specific needs. The planning officer also emphasized that major youth-focused initiatives face recurring budget constraints, which limit their execution and overall impact.

However, empirical evidence suggests that despite these inclusive design features, challenges remain in ensuring full accessibility and responsiveness. Studies indicate that awareness of available programs among target groups is sometimes limited, and accessibility barriers, especially for PWDs, can hinder effective participation. In addition, some interventions remain narrowly focused on economic empowerment, with limited attention to broader social and capacity development needs of youth and women. Civil society and governance reports also highlight that targeting mechanisms are not always sufficiently precise to reach the most vulnerable beneficiaries (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021; Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Therefore, while programs in Nyamasheke are inclusive in intent and partially responsive in practice, strengthening targeting and diversification of interventions is essential to ensure equitable and effective inclusion.

3.4.2 Institutional Roles and Coordination Mechanisms

In Nyamasheke District and Nyamagabe District, the inclusion of women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs) in implementation frameworks is guided not only by decentralized governance structures but also by national sector policy institutions. Specifically, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) provides the overarching policy framework for gender equality and women's empowerment, while the Ministry of Youth and Arts (MOYA) guides youth development and empowerment strategies. These institutions set national priorities, standards, and guidelines that are cascaded to districts and integrated into District Development Strategies (DDS) and Imihigo. In parallel, the Ministry of Local Government ensures coordination of these policies within the decentralization framework, facilitating their implementation at district and lower administrative levels.

Moreover, these policy frameworks are operationalized through decentralized institutional arrangements. Structures such as the National Women Council and National Youth Council act as implementation and coordination channels for MIGEPROF and MOYA, respectively, ensuring that women's and youth priorities are effectively represented and implemented at local levels. Similarly, inclusion of PWDs is guided by frameworks coordinated through the National Council of Persons with Disabilities. At the district level, these institutions collaborate with technical departments and local authorities to implement programs such as MSME support, job creation, and social protection interventions.

Therefore, the inclusion of women, youth, and PWDs in both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe is anchored in a multi-layered coordination system, where national policy institutions (MIGEPROF and MOYA) provide strategic direction, decentralized councils ensure representation and mobilization, and district authorities operationalize implementation. Strengthening this linkage between policy leadership and local execution remains essential to ensure coherence, avoid fragmentation, and enhance the effectiveness of inclusive development interventions.

3.5 Inclusion in Monitoring and Performance Management

Effective oversight mechanisms are critical for ensuring that inclusion commitments for women, youth, and persons with disabilities are translated into tangible outcomes in Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe Districts. Assessing inclusivity and transparency in monitoring and accountability structures helps determine whether these groups can meaningfully track progress, provide

feedback, and hold implementers accountable. This section examines how oversight mechanisms, such as National councils and community platforms, incorporate the perspectives of specific groups, the extent to which information is accessible, and whether decision-making processes are transparent, thereby promoting equitable participation and accountability.

3.5.1 Indicators and Disaggregation Practices

In both Nyamasheke District and Nyamagabe District, monitoring and performance management frameworks incorporate indicators that aim to track the inclusion of youth, women, and people with disabilities (PWDs) in district development initiatives. Performance contracts (Imihigo) and District Development Strategies (DDS) include metrics such as the number of youth- and women-led MSMEs supported, the number of PWDs receiving assistive devices, and the financial support provided to PWD cooperatives. These indicators reflect a deliberate effort to capture both economic and social dimensions of inclusion, linking them directly to the performance targets of sectors and districts. Furthermore, annual reporting and oversight sessions are structured to include discussions on these indicators, providing opportunities for councils and citizen representatives to assess whether interventions are meeting the needs of specific groups (Nyamasheke District, 2023/2024; Nyamagabe District, 2023/2024).

However, disaggregation practices remain uneven and present a significant limitation for inclusive performance monitoring. While some indicators are disaggregated by gender, age, or disability status, others, particularly at the district level, lack sufficient granularity, making it difficult to track the precise participation and benefit of youth, women, and PWDs in programs. For example, the Imihigo 2025/2026 reporting in both districts often aggregates beneficiaries without differentiating between subgroups, limiting the ability to assess equity in service delivery. Empirical studies and civil society reports indicate that this gap reduces accountability for inclusion and hinders evidence-based adjustments to programming (Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Strengthening disaggregation practices and integrating systematic tracking of marginalized groups into monitoring frameworks is, therefore, critical to ensuring that inclusion objectives translate into measurable and actionable outcomes.

3.5.2 Participation of specific ggroups in monitoring pprocesses

In Nyamasheke District, the review of monitoring and accountability mechanisms indicates that oversight processes are formally inclusive and relatively transparent, though with practical limitations. Regarding the role of specific groups in monitoring and accountability, a district official stated that all these groups are actively involved in the district's follow-up and monitoring mechanisms. For example, they participate in tracking the implementation of Imihigo at the sector level and in monitoring the implementation of Government programs, including Human security issues, etc…. Specifically, during the district council meetings, a designated session is reserved for councillors from these groups, ensuring their presence and engagement.

This was corroborated by representatives of the specific groups in the interview, who confirmed that the representatives of NYC, NWC, and NCPD actively participate in district council meetings and collaborate with the district in monitoring activities and holding leaders accountable when challenges arise. District staff responsible for these groups also affirmed this, noting that NYC,

NWC, and NCPD, which are members of the national councils at the district level, regularly visit lower administrative levels to oversee how these groups fulfill their responsibilities.

Mechanisms such as District and Sector Council oversight sessions, Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) reviews, Local Government (LG) Accountability Days, and open days provide structured opportunities for youth, women, and people with disabilities (PWDs) to engage in assessing service delivery and performance. Representatives from the National Youth Council, National Women Council, and National Council of Persons with Disabilities participate in these platforms, providing feedback and contributing to decision-making. While performance results are publicly shared, empirical evidence suggests that engagement is often limited by capacity gaps and accessibility constraints, which can reduce the influence of specific groups in oversight discussions (Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2021).

From a district-level professional standpoints for both Districts (Professional in charge of youth, Women and People with disabilities), women, youth, and persons with disabilities are formally included in monitoring and oversight mechanisms for district programs, including Imihigo and sectoral plans. Designated representatives from these groups participate in council meetings, joint monitoring visits, and community feedback sessions, ensuring that their perspectives are formally captured in reporting and accountability structures. And mentioned also that in practice, the level of meaningful participation varies. Engagement is often stronger at higher administrative levels but weaker at sector and cell levels, limiting community-level oversight. Logistical and resource constraints, such as transport, funding, and accessibility, further hinder consistent involvement. Additionally, limited technical capacity and insufficient disaggregated data reduce the ability of these groups to contribute effectively to evidence-based monitoring.

Similarly, in Nyamagabe District, specific groups play an active role in monitoring and accountability processes. A district official explained that these groups are consistently involved in tracking the implementation of *Imihigo* at the sector level and following up and monitoring the implementation of Government programs. For instance, the human security issue , specific groups are represented. Representatives of these groups confirmed that they actively engage in District council discussions and work closely with district authorities to monitor progress and hold leaders accountable when challenges arise. District staff also noted that members of the national councils at the district level regularly visit lower administrative levels to assess how these groups are fulfilling their responsibilities, reinforcing a structured system of oversight and accountability

For both Districts, accountability mechanisms incorporate structured participation of youth, women, and PWDs through LG Accountability Days, open days, council oversight meetings, and stakeholder coordination platforms. These forums allow community representatives to review Imihigo implementation and discuss service delivery performance with local authorities. The processes are guided by national transparency and accountability standards under the decentralization framework led by the Ministry of Local Government, ensuring that information is shared and inputs can be formally submitted.

However, studies indicate that actual participation of specific groups is inconsistent due to limited technical understanding, social barriers, and weak feedback mechanisms, which can reduce the effectiveness of their engagement in monitoring and decision-making processes (United Nations Development Programme, 2023; Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives, 2022).

In Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe districts, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are formally included in monitoring and accountability mechanisms for district programs, including *Imihigo* and sectoral plans. Designated representatives from the National Youth Council, National Women Council, and National Council of PWDs participate in district council meetings, oversight sessions, joint monitoring visits, and community feedback platforms such as LG Accountability Days and open days, ensuring their perspectives are captured in reporting and decision-making. While these structures provide a clear institutional framework for inclusion, meaningful participation varies: engagement is generally stronger at higher administrative levels but weaker at sector and cell levels, and is constrained by logistical, accessibility, and technical capacity challenges. Limited feedback mechanisms, social barriers, and insufficient disaggregated data further reduce the ability of these groups to influence evidence-based monitoring, highlighting the need for enhanced facilitation, capacity building, and inclusive approaches to strengthen accountability and service delivery oversight.

While the assessment confirms that women, youth, and persons with disabilities are formally represented in district monitoring and accountability platforms, such as district councils, joint action development forums, and community accountability meetings, the effectiveness of these mechanisms in promoting inclusive governance remains limited.

Evidence from interviews indicates that, although these groups participate in monitoring forums, their concerns are not always systematically documented, tracked, or followed up (interview findings). In many cases, participation is procedural, with limited influence on final decisions or corrective actions. This constrains the ability of monitoring systems to function as effective accountability mechanisms.

In addition, the analysis reveals important gaps in the use of disaggregated data. While some sectors collect basic administrative data, it is not consistently disaggregated by sex, age, and disability, limiting the capacity of districts to assess whether services are equitably reaching all population groups (document review). Where disaggregated data exists, it is not always used to inform planning adjustments or resource allocation decisions.

Furthermore, feedback mechanisms between communities and district authorities remain weak and uneven across administrative levels. Participants noted that issues raised by women, youth, and persons with disabilities during community meetings are not always communicated upward or addressed promptly, reducing trust in accountability processes (interview findings).

3.6 Budget Responsiveness to Inclusion Priorities

This dimension assesses how district budgets allocate resources to promote equity and inclusion for vulnerable groups. It examines whether funding priorities address the needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities and whether the distribution of resources aligns with identified priorities. The analysis highlights gaps between stated policy commitments and actual financial support for inclusive interventions, providing a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of budgetary inclusion.

3.6.1 Gender responsive budgets

In Nyamasheke District and Nyamagabe District, the preparation of gender-responsive budgets (GRB) is closely linked to the responsiveness of the district budget to inclusion priorities. By explicitly identifying and allocating funds for women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs) during budget formulation, districts ensure that strategic priorities outlined in the District Development Strategy (DDS) and annual Imihigo are financially supported. For instance, allocations for MSME support, start-up toolkits for youth and women, creation of off-farm jobs, cooperatives for PWDs, and provision of assistive devices reflect a deliberate effort to translate inclusion objectives into tangible, resourced interventions (Nyamasheke District, 2023/2024; Nyamagabe District, 2023/2024). This demonstrates a direct link between planning priorities and fiscal commitments, showing that the budget responds to the needs of marginalized groups.

Moreover, the budget review and approval process reinforces this responsiveness. District Budget Committees assess whether resources dedicated to inclusion priorities are sufficient, feasible, and aligned with policy guidance from MIGEPROF, MINIYOUTH, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. These mechanisms ensure that allocations are not only planned but also scrutinized for effectiveness, with adjustments made where necessary to enhance equity and inclusion. Empirical studies suggest that such alignment improves the likelihood that interventions for youth, women, and PWDs are implemented as intended, thereby strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of district budgets to inclusion priorities (Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; Ministry of Local Government, 2021).

By systematically integrating inclusion priorities into the budget, both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe demonstrate that fiscal planning can be an effective mechanism to operationalize equity objectives, ensuring that the needs of women, youth, and PWDs are considered and financed within local development frameworks.

District-level staff responsible for specific groups indicated that budget allocations for initiatives aimed at empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are primarily sourced from the national budget. However, locally identified priorities for youth and women in *Imihigo* depend on the resources available at the district level, which means that some planned activities may not be implemented due to funding constraints.

However, observed that these allocations are often not fully adequate to meet the identified needs. Limited financial resources, competing priorities, and occasional delays in fund disbursement were cited as constraints affecting the scale and effectiveness of inclusive interventions.

Therefore, there is a need for increased funding and strengthened targeting and monitoring to ensure that resources are truly responsive to the specific needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe Districts.

3.6.2 Allocation Patterns

Allocation patterns linking responsive budgets to the inclusion of women, youth, and PWDs in Nyamagabe District and Nyamasheke District are as follows:

3.6.2.1 Nyamasheke District

District budgets demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion by allocating resources to youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Youth-focused investments support entrepreneurship,

MSME development, and job creation, including targeted support for youth-owned businesses to access financing. Women benefit from programs that promote income-generating activities and strengthen their economic participation. For persons with disabilities, allocations cover assistive devices, cooperative support, and livelihood initiatives. Overall, these budget provisions show alignment with district priorities and reflect efforts to translate inclusion policies into practical, funded interventions.

3.6.2.2 Nyamagabe District

District budgets reflect a sustained commitment to inclusion through targeted support for youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Resources for youth focus on MSME development, skills training, and off-farm employment, with consistent funding across fiscal years to ensure continuity. For women, allocations support entrepreneurship, leadership development, and participation in cooperatives, often integrated within broader social protection and community development programs. Similarly, budgets for persons with disabilities prioritize assistive devices and support to cooperatives, aligning with district strategies and performance targets. Overall, these allocations demonstrate efforts to translate inclusion priorities into consistent and structured financial support.

Table 4 District Allocation Patterns

District	Youth-Focused Budget	Women-Focused Budget	PWD-Focused Budget
Nyamasheke	Start-up/MSME support, off-farm jobs, coaching	MSME training	Assistive devices, PWD cooperatives,
Nyamagabe	Start-up/MSME support, vocational training	MSME support and training	Assistive devices, PWD cooperatives,

Source*: District Allocation Patterns*

While district budgets include allocations targeting women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the extent to which these allocations are responsive to identified inclusion priorities varies across sectors and districts. Evidence from budget analysis indicates that some planned interventions, such as support to cooperatives, vocational training, and provision of assistive devices, are reflected in annual budgets with dedicated budget lines (document review). However, other priorities identified in district planning documents are not consistently matched with corresponding financial allocations.

A comparative analysis of Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts reveals variations in the extent to which budget allocations respond to inclusion priorities. In both districts, budgets include interventions targeting women, youth, and persons with disabilities, particularly in areas such as economic empowerment, social protection, and skills development (document review). However, the depth, consistency, and sustainability of these allocations differ.

In Nyamagabe District, inclusion-related priorities, particularly those targeting women and vulnerable households, are more consistently reflected in annual budgets, often through programs linked to national priorities such as social protection and livelihood support. However, certain priorities identified in district planning documents, especially those related to persons with disabilities (e.g., accessibility infrastructure and specialized services), are not systematically

supported by dedicated budget lines. In addition, some inclusion-related interventions are embedded within broader sector programs, making it difficult to clearly track the level of financial commitment to specific target groups.

In Nyamasheke District, while similar categories of inclusion interventions are present, the analysis indicates a relatively higher dependence on central government transfers and externally supported programs. As a result, some locally identified priorities, particularly those requiring sustained and targeted financing, are either partially funded or not funded at all. This suggests constraints in district-level fiscal space and limited flexibility to respond to context-specific inclusion needs (interview and document review).

Across both districts, a common pattern emerges whereby inclusion priorities are articulated in planning frameworks but are not always fully translated into corresponding budget allocations. This results in uneven coverage across target groups and limits the effectiveness of inclusion efforts in practice.

A key issue across both districts is the mismatch between inclusion priorities identified in planning documents and actual budget allocations. While district plans highlight a broad range of needs for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, not all of these are translated into funded interventions. For example, priorities such as disability-friendly infrastructure, targeted youth employment programs, and sustained participation mechanisms are not consistently reflected in annual budgets (document review and interview findings). This indicates that inclusion is not yet fully institutionalized within budget decision-making processes.

Table 5. Budget Allocation for Inclusion Priorities by District

Target Group	Priority	Nyamagabe District	Nyamasheke District	Trend Over Time	Funding Source	Key Gap
Women	Economic empowerment (cooperatives, VUP support)	Budgeted (consistent)	Budgeted (moderate)	Stable	Central + District	Coverage not sufficient for all
Youth	Skills development and employment	Budgeted (moderate)	Budgeted (inconsistent)	Fluctuating	Mainly Central	Limited sustainability
PWDs	Assistive devices	Budgeted (partial)	Budgeted (partial)	Stable	Central	Limited reach and scale
PWDs	Accessibility infrastructure	Not clearly budgeted	Not budgeted	N/A	N/A	Major gap in both districts
Youth	Participation & engagement	Partially budgeted	Limited/Not budgeted	Decreasing	District	Weak prioritization
Cross-cutting	Inclusion in planning & coordination	Budgeted (embedded)	Budgeted (embedded)	Stable	District	Lack of dedicated budget lines

Source: Consultant's compilation

Overall, the findings suggest that while both Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts demonstrate formal commitment to inclusive budgeting, this commitment is not yet consistently translated into adequate, sustained, and equitable financial allocations. The observed gaps between planning and budgeting, as well as differences in funding patterns and reliance on external resources, limit the ability of districts to effectively respond to the needs of all population groups. Strengthening budget responsiveness, particularly through clearer linkage between priorities and allocations and increased use of district-level resources, is essential to ensure that inclusion commitments result in tangible and equitable development outcomes.

3.6.2.3 Alignment between Plans, Budgets, and Results

In both Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe Districts, there is a structured alignment between strategic planning documents (DDS), annual performance contracts (Imihigo), and budget allocations. The District Development Strategies (DDS) identify priority outcomes, such as economic empowerment of youth and women, PWD inclusion, and social protection coverage. These outcomes are then translated into measurable targets in the Imihigo, specifying interventions like MSME coaching, start-up toolkits, off-farm job creation, provision of assistive devices, and financial support to cooperatives. This ensures that the strategic objectives of the districts are operationalized through concrete actions (Nyamasheke District, 2018–2024; Nyamagabe District, 2018–2024).

Budgets are explicitly linked to these planned interventions, reflecting responsiveness to inclusion priorities. Dedicated allocations for youth, women, and PWD-focused programs ensure that the strategies and targets are not just aspirational but financially supported. For example, start-up and existing MSMEs for youth and women are coached and financed, while PWD cooperatives and assistive devices are funded directly from the district budget. This demonstrates a strong vertical alignment: DDS priorities → Imihigo targets → budget allocations → implemented interventions (Nyamasheke District, 2023/2024; Nyamagabe District, 2023/2024, 2024/2025,2025/2026).

At the results level, performance is monitored through structured oversight mechanisms, including District and Sector Council meetings and citizen forums. These platforms enable assessment of whether budgeted activities achieve the intended DDS and Imihigo outcomes, particularly for specific groups. Nyamasheke and Nyamagabe demonstrate substantial alignment between plans, budgets, and results. The effectiveness of this alignment for inclusive development depends on improved monitoring, detailed disaggregation of results, and active engagement of specific groups to ensure that budgeted interventions translate into tangible benefits for youth, women, and PWDs.

4 Discussion and Synthesis of Key Insights

4.1 Cross-Cutting Inclusion Gaps

4.1.1 Nyamasheke District

a) Limited Budget for Local Priorities**:** Many locally identified initiatives for youth and women in *Imihigo* are underfunded, risking non-implementation.
b) PWD Empowerment Gaps**:** While assistive devices are provided, there is limited support for social inclusion, recreation, and rights-based empowerment.
c) Uneven Participation Across Levels**:** Engagement is stronger at district council levels but weaker at sector and cell levels, limiting community-level oversight.
d) Capacity and Feedback Gaps**:** Representatives face challenges in evidence-based monitoring due to limited technical capacity and weak feedback mechanisms.
e) Partial Inclusion in Youth and Women Programs**:** Larger initiatives, such as youth entrepreneurship, skills development, and cultural or recreational projects, are often missing from district *Imihigo* due to budget constraints

4.1.2 Nyamagabe District

a) Limited Cell-Level Functionality**:** Youth, women, and PWD structures at the cell level (NYC, NWC, NCPD) are largely non-functional, reducing grassroots participation.
b) Limited Participation in Planning**:** Representatives are more visible during approval of *Imihigo*, but meaningful engagement in planning and decision-making is limited.
c) Accessibility Barriers: Physical inaccessibility of village meeting points and lack of transport or facilitation for PWDs hinders participation.
d) Capacity Constraints**:** Limited technical knowledge, sign language proficiency, and insufficient disaggregated data reduce the ability of groups to contribute effectively.
e) Social and Structural Barriers**:** Social norms, peak work hours for youth, and informal employment limit consistent involvement in planning and monitoring.

4.2 Emerging Good Practices and Innovations

4.2.1 Nyamasheke District

In Nyamasheke District, inclusive governance is strengthened through institutionalized participation of youth, women, and persons with disabilities via decentralized structures of the National Youth Council (NYC), National Women Council (NWC), and National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). These structures serve as formal channels for representing specific groups in district councils, planning discussions, and monitoring of *Imihigo*. The district also promotes inclusive accountability through platforms such as Local Government Accountability Days, open days, council oversight sessions, and JADF meetings, where representatives of these groups review service delivery and raise community concerns. In addition, representatives participate in joint monitoring visits to sectors to track the implementation of *Imihigo* and government programs, strengthening transparency and shared accountability between citizens and district authorities.

4.2.2 Nyamagabe District:

In Nyamagabe District, decentralized council structures also play an important role in mobilizing community priorities and ensuring that the needs of youth, women, and PWDs are transmitted from cell and sector levels into district planning processes. The district further promotes economic empowerment through initiatives such as coaching and financing MSMEs owned by youth and women, and providing support to PWD cooperatives. Representatives from NYC, NWC, and NCPD at the district level regularly conduct field follow-up visits to lower administrative levels to monitor how these groups are functioning and how targeted programs are implemented. Additionally, the integration of measurable inclusion indicators in the District Development Strategy helps institutionalize inclusive governance and track the participation of youth, women, and PWD organizations in planning and development processes.

4.3 District-Level Variations and Explanatory Factors

4.3.1 Nyamasheke District

Nyamasheke exhibits similar inclusion priorities but with notable differences in implementation outcomes. Economic empowerment remains the central focus, with MSME coaching, financial support, off-farm jobs, and PWD cooperatives forming the bulk of interventions. Institutionalized representation of youth, women, and PWDs through NYC, NWC, and NCPD at cell, sector, and district levels strengthens formal participation in planning and oversight (Nyamasheke District, 2018–2024; 2024–2029).

Explanatory factors for variations include differences in institutional coordination and capacity at the local government level. Some sectors experience delays in translating DDS priorities into Imihigo activities due to financial constraints. Additionally**,** limited awareness and accessibility barriers reduce the effective engagement of specific groups in citizen forums and oversight events, such as LG Accountability Days and open days. Social norms, especially regarding gender roles, further constrain the participation of women and youth.

4.3.2 Nyamagabe District

In Nyamagabe, inclusion of youth, women, and PWDs in district planning and implementation exhibits relatively strong alignment between strategic objectives and actionable interventions. The DDS and Imihigo frameworks clearly prioritize economic empowerment through MSME coaching, start-up support, off-farm job creation, and the provision of assistive devices.

Participation mechanisms, such as citizen forums, LG Accountability Days, and structured council meetings at sector and district levels, provide formal avenues for specific groups to influence decision-making. These arrangements contribute to relatively high integration of inclusion priorities, particularly in economic domains (Nyamagabe District, 2018–2024; 2024–2029).

However, variations emerge due to several explanatory factors. First, geographical accessibility affects participation: remote communities often have lower turnout in planning forums, limiting input from rural youth, women, and PWDs. Second, resource prioritization focuses heavily on economic empowerment, resulting in the underrepresentation of social, cultural, and recreational initiatives for youth. Lastly, social and cultural norms sometimes discourage active engagement of women and PWDs, despite formal inclusion mechanisms (Transparency International Rwanda, 2022; UNDP, 2023).

While both districts demonstrate strong policy-level commitment to inclusion, variations in participation and local governance capacity explain the observed differences in implementation outcomes. Addressing these factors would strengthen equitable access and participation for youth, women, and PWDs across both districts.

4.4 Key gaps, good practices, and institutional constraints influence meaningful participation and equitable benefit for women, youth, and persons with disabilities at the district level

The analysis of Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke districts highlights that, while formal structures exist to promote the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), several district-specific constraints limit meaningful inclusion as summarized in the tables below. .

4.4.1 Nyamasheke District

In Nyamasheke, weak capacity-building programs, budget constraints, and insufficient economic and social support for women and PWDs constrain participation and equitable benefit as detailed in the table below: These district-specific constraints underscore the need for targeted capacity-building, resource allocation, and structural adaptations to strengthen inclusive planning and implementation.

*Table 6: **Constraints affecting the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities***

Target Group	Key Gaps and Challenges	Implications for Inclusion
Youth	Declining volunteerism spirit among youth, increasingly replaced by expectations of financial incentives.	Weakens civic engagement and voluntary participation in community development activities.
	Limited capacity-building programs in entrepreneurship, project planning, and leadership.	Reduces youth capacity to initiate and sustain development projects and actively contribute to planning processes.

	A few large-scale youth empowerment initiatives are included in *Imihigo*	Budget constraints for projects such as youth centers, playgrounds, and entrepreneurship support
	Youth priorities are often included in action plans, but not funded	Dependence on centrally funded programs (MOYA, MIGEPROF)
	Youth participation is sometimes limited to representation rather than active influence	Limited resources to implement youth-focused initiatives
	Youth priorities are not consistently reflected in district planning	Youth engagement is limited during planning processes
	Weak functionality of NYC structures at the cell level due to some not knowing their attributions	Youth are unavailable during meetings due to informal employment or farming activities/they are unstable/Mobility leads to the reduction of grassroots participation
Women	Limited diversification of youth empowerment initiatives	Planning meetings often conflicts with the youth's working hours
	Limited integration of locally identified women's priorities in District *Imihigo*	Limited district budget to implement women empowerment initiatives
	Participation is stronger at the district level than at the sector/cell level	Weak feedback mechanisms from grassroots structures
	Few programs beyond economic empowerment	Limited influence in technical planning committees
	Limited Cell-Level Functionality: Youth, women, and PWD structures at the cell level (NYC, NWC, NCPD) are largely non-functional,	Reduce grassroots participation.
Persons with Disabilities	Limited resources and targeted support programs for persons with disabilities.	Reduces opportunities for social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.
	Empowerment mainly focused on assistive devices	Lack of broader economic and social inclusion programs
	Limited participation in planning and monitoring forums	Accessibility constraints and limited mobilization at the community level
	Limited Cell-Level Functionality: Youth, women, and PWD structures at the cell level (NYC, NWC, NCPD) are largely non-functional,	Reduce grassroots participation.
Both Districts	Some planned interventions were not implemented due to budget constraints.	Planned inclusion initiatives are delayed or not implemented, limiting equitable development outcomes.

Source: The consultant's compilation

4.4.2 Nyamagabe District

In Nyamagabe, challenges include limited capacity-building for youth representatives, high youth mobility, separation of youth *Imihigo* from district planning, absence of a YEGO Center, and insufficient recreational and sports activities, as well as declining volunteerism among youth. Women and PWDs face restricted empowerment opportunities and limited integration of locally identified priorities as summarized in the table below.

Table 7: Constraints affecting the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities

Target Group	Key Gaps and Challenges	Implications for Inclusion
Youth	Declining volunteerism spirit among youth, increasingly replaced by expectations of financial incentives.	Weakens civic engagement and voluntary participation in community development activities.
	Limited capacity-building programs in entrepreneurship, project planning, and leadership.	Reduces youth capacity to initiate and sustain development projects and actively contribute to planning processes.
	A few large-scale youth empowerment initiatives are included in *Imihigo*	Budget constraints for projects such as youth centers, playgrounds, and entrepreneurship support
	Youth priorities are often included in action plans, but not funded	Dependence on centrally funded programs (MOYA, MIGEPROF)
	Youth participation is sometimes limited to representation rather than active influence	Limited resources to implement youth-focused initiatives
	Youth priorities are not consistently reflected in district planning	Youth engagement is limited during planning processes
	Weak functionality of NYC structures at the cell level due to some not knowing their attributions	Youth are unavailable during meetings due to informal employment or farming activities/they are unstable/Mobility leads to the reduction of grassroots participation
Women	Limited diversification of youth empowerment initiatives	Planning meetings often conflicts with the youth's working hours
	Limited integration of locally identified women's priorities in District *Imihigo*	Limited district budget to implement women empowerment initiatives
	Participation is stronger at the district level than at the sector/cell level	Weak feedback mechanisms from grassroots structures
	Few programs beyond economic empowerment	Limited influence in technical planning committees
	Limited Cell-Level Functionality: Youth, women, and PWD structures at the cell level (NYC, NWC, NCPD) are largely non-functional,	Reduce grassroots participation.
Persons with Disabilities	Limited resources and targeted support programs for persons with disabilities.	Reduces opportunities for social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.
	Empowerment mainly focused on assistive devices	Lack of broader economic and social inclusion programs
	Limited participation in planning and monitoring forums	Accessibility constraints and limited mobilization at the community level
	Limited Cell-Level Functionality: Youth, women, and PWD structures at the cell level (NYC, NWC, NCPD) are largely non-functional,	Reduce grassroots participation.
Both Districts	Some planned interventions were not implemented due to budget constraints.	Planned inclusion initiatives are delayed or not implemented, limiting equitable development outcomes.

Source: The consultant's compilation

5 Advocacy priorities

Table 8: Advocacy Issues and Recommended Actions

Key Issue	Evidence	Advocacy Ask	Target Institution
Weak link between planning and implementation	Inclusion priorities in DDS are not fully implemented (interviews, document review)	Ensure all inclusion priorities are translated into funded and implemented activities	Districts (Nyamagabe, Nyamasheke)
Limited budget responsiveness	Some priorities (e.g., PWD infrastructure) not budgeted	Increase allocation for unfunded inclusion priorities	District Councils, MINECOFIN
Weak disaggregated data	Limited data by sex, age, and disability	Strengthen data systems and require disaggregated reporting	NISR, Districts
Limited influence of participation	Inputs from youth/PWDs not reflected in decisions	Strengthen mechanisms to ensure inputs influence planning and budgeting	District authorities
Weak monitoring feedback loops	Issues raised not followed up	Establish structured feedback and tracking mechanisms	Districts, MINALOC

Based on the findings, the following priority issues require immediate attention to strengthen inclusive governance in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke:

1. **Bridging the gap between planning and implementation.** Despite strong inclusion in planning documents, implementation remains uneven. Advocacy should focus on ensuring that all planned inclusion priorities are translated into funded and implemented actions.
2. **Strengthening budget responsiveness**. Inclusion is not yet consistently reflected in budget allocations. There is a need to advocate for dedicated and sustained financing for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
3. **Improving disaggregated data and monitoring systems**. Weak data systems limit the ability to track inclusion outcomes. Strengthening data collection and use is essential for accountability.
4. **Enhancing meaningful participation**. Participation of target groups remains largely procedural. Advocacy should promote mechanisms that ensure their inputs influence decisions.
5. **Strengthening accountability and feedback mechanisms**. Weak follow-up on issues raised undermines trust and effectiveness. Improved feedback systems are needed across all administrative levels.

5.1 District-specific advocacy area

5.1.1 Nyamagabe District

a) Strengthen budget allocation for disability-related priorities, particularly infrastructure accessibility
b) Improve tracking of inclusion interventions within sector programs
c) Ensure consistency in funding for youth and women empowerment programs

5.1.2 Nyamasheke District

a) Reduce reliance on external funding by increasing district-level budget commitment to inclusion
b) Prioritize funding for currently unfunded inclusion needs
c) Strengthen implementation follow-through on planned inclusion interventions

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Overall Conclusions on the State of Inclusion

In both Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke Districts, formal structures exist to ensure the representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in local governance, planning, and monitoring processes. Institutionalized channels such as the National Youth Council, National Women Council, and National Council of Persons with Disabilities provide entry points for these groups to participate in Imihigo implementation, district council oversight, and community engagement forums. These mechanisms reflect a strong policy commitment to inclusion under the decentralization framework, providing a foundation for participatory governance and structured oversight.

Despite these institutional arrangements, meaningful participation remains uneven across districts and administrative levels. In Nyamagabe, constraints such as limited capacity-building for youth representatives, high mobility, separation of youth Imihigo from district plans, absence of YEGO centers, and limited recreational and sports activities reduce the effectiveness of engagement. In Nyamasheke, declining volunteerism, budget limitations, weak capacity-building programs, and insufficient economic and social support for women and PWDs constrain the translation of inclusion policies into tangible outcomes. In both districts, PWD participation is limited by accessibility challenges and inadequate tools such as sign language interpreters and Braille materials, particularly at the cell and sector levels.

Nonetheless, both districts demonstrate emerging good practices and innovations that can be leveraged to strengthen inclusion. Structured council oversight, joint monitoring of Imihigo, integration of inclusion indicators in district planning, and targeted economic empowerment initiatives for youth, women, and PWDs show potential for sustainable participation. To enhance these gains, targeted capacity-building, resource allocation, structural adaptations, and alignment of youth and women's priorities with district planning are critical. With these measures, districts can move from formal representation toward substantive, meaningful inclusion that ensures

While institutional mechanisms for inclusion exist in Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke, translating representation into meaningful participation and equitable benefits requires strengthened capacity, resources, and alignment and full integration of local priorities into district planning, implementation, and monitoring.

6.2 Strategic Recommendations

Actor	Recommended Actions	Expected Impact
District Authorities (Nyamagabe & Nyamasheke)	Provide structured training programs for youth and women representatives in entrepreneurship, project planning, leadership, and financial management.	Enhanced capacity of representatives to engage meaningfully in planning, monitoring, and decision-making.
	Align youth and women Imihigo with District Development Strategies to ensure integration and sustainability.	Reduced fragmentation of initiatives; better alignment of local priorities with district planning.
	Ensure PWD inclusion by providing accessible venues, sign language interpreters, Braille materials, and logistical support for meetings.	Improved participation of PWDs at cell, sector, and district levels; greater equity in planning and monitoring.
	Develop youth, women and PWDs empowerment infrastructure (e.g., YEGO centers, playgrounds, community hubs).	Increased social, cultural, and economic engagement opportunities for youth, women and PWDs.
	Promote volunteerism and civic engagement among youth through recognition and non-financial incentives.	Strengthened local ownership and active community participation.
	Introduce structured feedback mechanisms between grassroots structures and district councils.	Improved responsiveness of district planning and enhanced accountability to local communities.
	Allocate dedicated budget lines for inclusion-focused initiatives.	Ensures implementation of locally identified priorities without reliance solely on central funding.
	Review District Development Strategy (DDS) to enhance inclusion of women, youth, and PWDs.	Stronger integration of local priorities: Women, youth, and PWD-specific needs and aspirations are systematically reflected in district plans and Imihigo.
Central Government (MIGEPROF, MOYA, MINALOC)	Guide integrating youth and women priorities into the district Imihigo and DDS frameworks.	Harmonized planning across administrative levels; reduced fragmentation of interventions.
	Facilitate capacity-building workshops and technical assistance for district councils and local representatives.	Strengthened the technical and managerial skills of representatives for effective participation.
	Operationalize sector decentralization of centrally funded programs targeting youth, women, and PWDs, including entrepreneurship, skill development, and recreational initiatives.	Improved access to resources and support for vulnerable groups.
	Provide monitoring and evaluation tools to track participation and performance of inclusion initiatives.	Evidence-based decision-making and accountability for inclusive development.
CCOIB and Civil Society Partners	Support training and mentoring for elected youth, women, and PWD representatives.	Improved advocacy and effective representation of community priorities.
	Design complementary projects in entrepreneurship, project planning, and social engagement to fill gaps from district budget constraints.	Increased implementation of empowerment initiatives and equitable benefits.

	Advocate for accessible venues, interpreters, and PWD-friendly services at cell and sector levels.	Strengthened accessibility and participation of PWDs at all administrative levels.
	Promote innovative engagement tools (digital platforms, mobile consultations) for youth with high mobility or informal work schedules.	Greater reach and inclusivity of youth voices in planning and monitoring.
	Promote sports and recreational activities.	Enhanced youth engagement, social cohesion, and holistic development, providing opportunities for talent development, physical well-being, and community participation.
	Organize peer learning exchanges among districts	Improved knowledge sharing and replication of best practices, enabling districts to learn from each other's successful inclusion initiatives and strengthen local governance and empowerment programs.
Cross-Cutting	Institutionalize quarterly joint coordination meetings between district councils, national councils, CCOIB, and partners.	Improved coordination, learning, and timely problem-solving for inclusion initiatives.
	Include disaggregated indicators for women, youth, and PWDs in DDS, Imihigo, and reporting frameworks.	Enhanced transparency, accountability, and evidence-based tracking of inclusion outcomes.
	Pilot innovative approaches in youth entrepreneurship, women cooperatives, and PWD empowerment.	Scalable models for sustainable and effective inclusion interventions.

7 Annexes

Annex 1: References

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Annexe 2: Interview guide for District officials/Inyoborakiganiro igenewe Abakozi b'Akarere

1. To what extent are women, youth, and persons with disabilities explicitly reflected in district planning and performance instruments, including Imihigo, District Action Plans, and implementation reports?
   Ni ku rugero rungana iki abagore, urubyiruko n'abafite ubumuga bagira uruhare mu igenamigambi , ishyirwa bikorwa n'íkurikirana ry'imihigo y'akarere? niba barugira, rungana gute ugereranije n'abandi , bigenda gute?

2. To what degree are budget allocations and targeting mechanisms responsive to the specific needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities?

   Ni ku rugero rungana iki ingengo y'imari igenerwa ibikorwa byo gukemura ibibazo by'abagore, urubyiruko n'abantu bafite ubumug ugereranije n'ingengo y'imari y'ibindi bikorwa?

3. How are inclusion-related commitments monitored, reported, and accounted for within district performance and reporting systems?

   Ni gute imihigo ijyanye no guteza imbere ibyiciro byihariye ikurikiranwa, igatangwaho raporo mu karere?

4. What key gaps, good practices, and institutional constraints influence meaningful participation and equitable benefit for women, youth, and persons with disabilities at the district level?

   Ni he hakigaragara icyuho,ni izihe ngero nziza zo kwigiraho ndetse ni izihe mbogamizi zo mu nzego z'ubuyobozi zibangamira uruhare n'inyungu by'abagore, urubyiruko n'abafite ubumuga?

Annex 3: Interview guide for NWC, NYC, and NCPC District Coordinators/Inyoborakiganiro igenewe Abahuzabikorwa b'urwego rw'abagore, urubyiruko n'abafite ubumuga ku Karere

1. To what extent are women, youth, and persons with disabilities explicitly reflected in district planning and performance instruments, including Imihigo, District Action Plans, and implementation? Do you rate the level of participation high or low? If low, what are the challenges? What are the strategies to overcome these?

   Ese icyiciro muhagarariye, bigira uruhare mu kugena ibikorwa bijya mu igenamigambi, mu ishyirwa mubikorwa no mu ikurikiranabikorwa ryíbikorwa byÁkarere? uruhare rurashimishije? Niba Rudashimishije byaba biterwa n'iki? byakosorwa gute?

2. Does the District allocate budget to activities aimed at promoting and advancing the group you represent? Could you provide an example?

   Ese Akarere gashyira mu ngengo y'imari ibikorwa bigamije guteza imbere icyiciro muhagarariye? Mwaduha urugero.

Annex 4. List of key informants interviewed

S/N	POSITION	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
NYAMASHEKE DISTRICT			
1	Vice mayor in charge of social affairs	MUKANKUSI Athanasie	0785632615
2	Director of good governance	Adolphe	0788610668
3	Director of planning	NIZEYIMANA Jean Pierre	0788776216
4	Director of Finance	NIZEYIMANA Claver	0788306567
5	District staff in charge of youth	MUNEZA Degrace	0783019346
6	STAFF/DISABILITY	UWASE Sifa	0783886326
8	CNJR	MUGABO Jackson	0788466863
9	NCPD	UWABAKURIKIZA Joseph	0783323880
NYAMAGABE District			
1	Vice Mayor in charge of economic development	HABIMANA Thaddee	0788601031
2	Director of governance		
3	Director of planning	Nsanzamahoro Maurice	0788413785
4	Director of Finance		0788306567
5	CNF	UmumararunguBeata	0788403314
6	CNJR	Nshimiyimana Gilbert	0781439960
7	NCPD	Munyentarama Anastase	0783679692
8	District staff/Youth	Irakarama Gabriel	0785022144
9	Disability officer		0788655618