

## **Abstract**

This research, “The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR) and Persons with Disabilities (PWD): Contextual analysis, structures and Strategies aims to develop a model of inclusive church” seeks to fetch into the social theories of disabilities to inform the Church initiative on inclusion. Faith plays an important role in the lives of PWD thus exclusion due to any reason is impeding on their rights as formulate in international and national legal instruments. The Ecumenical Disability Advocate Network (EDAN) experience and the re-reading of the first Epistle to Corinthians set a foundation the inclusive because the church is a church for all to be healthy and whole.

This exploratory study tries to respond to the following question “How the (EPR) can become inclusive of PWD?” The research methodology includes focus groups discussion (FGD) of thirty-nine PWD, administration of thirteen questionnaires to thirteen church leaders from national level to parish level and observation of the venues using accessibility checklist.

The results of the research showed that PWD are confronted to a fourfold barrier: attitudinal and physical barriers, institution and lack of support (lack of basic mobility assistive devices, lack of proper communication and lack of proper) and poverty support in terms of accompaniment of PWD.

The strategies suggested by PWD to be included on one hand and by church leaders to be able to include PWD on the other hand are: change in the attitudes, improved physical accessibility. Promoting equal and equitable participation of PWD in structures and strategies of EPR and catering for needs outside the church.

The action plan developed from the suggestions of the PWD and the action plans of the church leaders at all level are as follows: Educating PWD and church members on the disability rights and issues, adjustment of the existing infrastructures of the church. For new buildings, they should be built according the standards of universal design. Changing the language by creating awareness on disability and including PWD on commissions or creating a department on disability and starting disability advocates network in EPR.