



SEPTEMBER 2025

Capacity

# Developing Sustainable Assessment Systems in Africa: Rwanda

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# COORDINATED STRUCTURE ANCHORS RWANDA'S EXPANDING ASSESSMENT CAPACITY



## ASSESSMENT TEAM

- The core assessment team sits within the **Examination Department** of the **National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA)**.
- There are seven core units within the Examinations Department:
  - In charge of assessment preparation:
    - ◆ Math and Science Subjects Question Item Bank Unit
    - ◆ Languages Subjects Question Item Bank Unit
    - ◆ Arts and Humanities Subjects Question Item Bank Unit
    - ◆ TVET Subjects Question Item Bank Unit
  - **Examination Management Unit** - oversees organization and quality assurance of assessments.
  - **Selection, Orientation, and Certification Unit** - handles student placement and certification at the end of each education cycle (primary and secondary).
  - **Examination and Learning Achievement Unit** - leads data collection, analysis, and research projects, including managing external development partner collaborations.



## TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

- **No formalized technical committee** but technical support received from local and external experts:
  - University of Rwanda, College of Education involved in quality assurance of national assessments.
  - External consultants from organizations like ACER and OECD provide technical inputs, especially for sample-based assessments (e.g. LARS, PISA, AMPL).



## STEERING COMMITTEE

- Oversight provided by the **Technical Senior Management Team of the Ministry of Education**, chaired by the Minister.
- All national assessment processes must be validated by the Ministry's senior leadership before implementation.



## EXPANDING ASSESSMENT COVERAGE THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Rwanda's assessment framework is built around a combination of national assessments covering all students and emerging participation in sample-based and international studies to inform policy reforms and track global goals.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS <sup>1</sup>	REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS	INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS <sup>2</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LARS</b> (<i>Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools</i>) - Conducted every <b>2 years</b>; assesses <b>English, Kinyarwanda, Mathematics</b> and <b>Science</b> in <b>Grades P3, P6</b> and <b>Senior 3</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Currently not involved in any regional assessments.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AMPL</b> (<i>Assessment Minimum Proficiency Levels</i>) - Participating for the first time in <b>2025</b>; will be conducted every <b>2 years</b>; assesses <b>Literacy</b> and <b>Numeracy</b> in <b>Grades P1 to P3</b> for <b>SGD reporting</b>.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Only foundational level sample-based assessments utilised for research purposes and informing policy reported. Assessments conducted by all students not reported.

<sup>2</sup> Other international assessments: PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) - Conducted every 2 years; assesses English, Mathematics and Science among 15 year olds.



*There is an organization which is very much specialized in project-based assessment, and they come to impose project-based assessment while we do not have it in our plans to implement. That will not be accepted, because why should we be having project-based assessment while it is not in our regulations? While it is not in our plans?*

## STRENGTHENING RWANDA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THROUGH TARGETED CAPACITY AND SYSTEM REFORMS

While Rwanda's assessment infrastructure is evolving rapidly, key technical gaps and system limitations require ongoing investment in local expertise, digital infrastructure, and sustainable partnerships.



### CHALLENGES

- Limited availability of psychometricians, assessment specialists, and data analysts within NESA.
- **Heavy reliance on external consultants** for data analysis, psychometric review and item analysis..
- Current systems rely on **manual data processing** (Excel, paper-based methods).
- Lack of automated tools for question-level and item-level performance analysis.



### POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

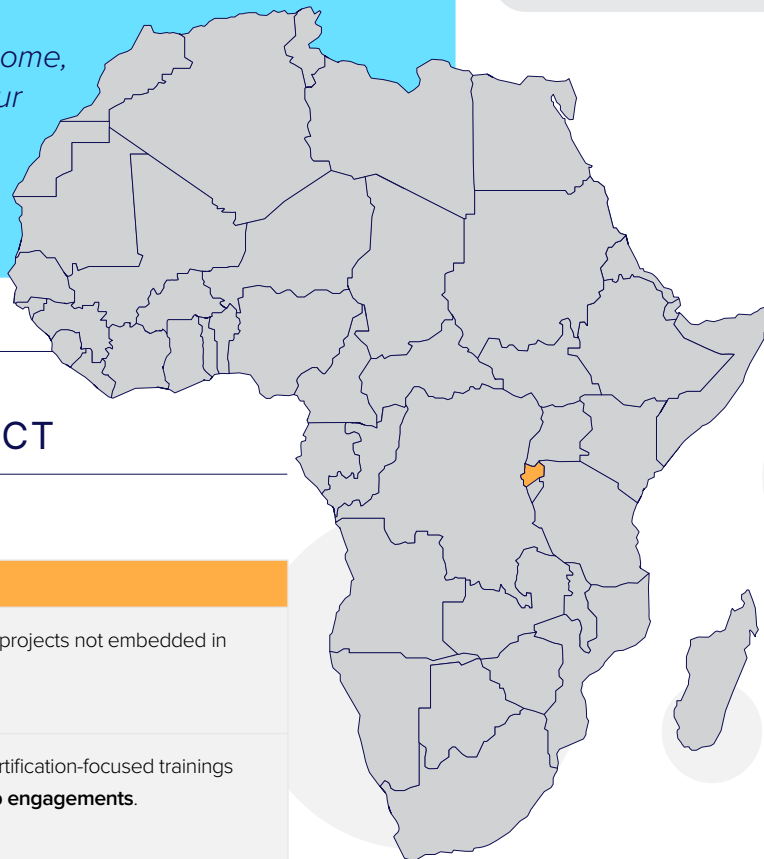
- **Align external technical support to national priorities** by requiring all international partners to work within national educational plans and build local team capacity rather than implementing parallel projects.
- **Invest in digital platforms** for assessment administration, marking (e.g. scanning technologies), and real-time data analysis.

Source	Description	Frequency	Duration	Participation
ACER / IPA / World Bank / Local Universities	Training on assessment quality, data analysis and psychometrics	-	-	-

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Whatever any development partner is trying to implement in the country, we make sure that all the activities fall into the national plans... I have this in my plans. You look at the plan, you select in which area you want to support. You support under our name. It's like we partner. And once you leave, you leave.

It's not like you want to implement this – you come, you implement it – while we didn't have it in our plans. That solves the problem, the issue of sustainability.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING ASSESSMENT IMPACT

Recommendations for International Organizations:

Start Doing	Stop Doing
Review local strategic frameworks and only offer support that strengthens pre-identified national priorities.	Stop introducing projects not embedded in national plans.
<b>Adopt a “We Do Together” model of capacity building</b> whereby the focus is on technical accompaniment through working side-by-side until national staff are independently capable.	Avoid one-off, certification-focused trainings with no <b>follow-up engagements</b> .
Embed skill-building goals directly into all technical assistance engagements.	Don't impose external solutions that leave national teams without capacity for independent action after project closure.

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The model that we like the most is “we do first”, because we normally do not stop what we are doing. You come and see what we are doing, and then we continue doing it while you provide tech support. You oversee, and we continue doing it. It's like – we don't let you do what you want and us observe – no. It's like: I do, you do, we do together until I master what I have to do.