



Why assistive technology matters in Early Childhood Development

Brenda, age 7, from St. Bernadette Primary school in Hoima, Uganda has a visual impairment. She listens to a recorded lesson from a Victor Reader that allows pupils to listen to lessons and access audio books.

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Investing in assistive technology is important for people’s lives from early childhood to old age, and across multiple sectors. The relevance of assistive technology to people’s lives is too big to ignore.

For young children, having access to assistive technology such as glasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, or digital devices for communication is transformational for lifelong outcomes. Early childhood (age 0-8) is a crucial time of life when cognitive, physical, language, motor skills, social and emotional development occurs. In low-income countries, children with disabilities - and girls more so than boys - face major challenges affecting their early development, and young children without access to assistive technology may be excluded from critical early childhood development (ECD) interventions.



Why assistive technology matters in ECD

Early assessment and support with assistive technology is crucial for lifelong development

outcomes. Assessing young children for impairments and providing support with assistive technology and related services is crucial to facilitate ECD and is relevant across education; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; nutrition; early stimulation and learning; early bonding; attachment; communication; and protection. For example, simple devices such as drinking cups with straps to aid holding, and seating support, can facilitate better childhood nutrition. Providing assistive technology services for young children requires governments to collaborate with stakeholders across multiple sectors.

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interventions. ECD interventions designed to meet the needs of the world's most vulnerable children will not be fully inclusive without ensuring assistive technology services. The longer that impairments remain undiscovered and younger children left unsupported, the longer it takes for them to catch up and recover their development and education. Specialist assistive products and services must be adapted frequently as the young child grows and develops.

Assistive technology interventions can have a long-term economic impact for individuals and

their carers and families. In low- and middle-income countries, sustained provision of hearing aids, glasses, or wheelchairs to a person from childhood can increase their lifetime income by more than US\$100,000. When young children gain greater independence through assistive technology and can attend pre-school and school, carers and families have more time to work and earn an income. The economic benefits of assistive technology are widespread: every dollar invested in providing assistive technology can bring a nine dollar return.



Inclusion is key to realize the promise of the SDGs and leave no one behind. There will not be full inclusion while young children are unable to access assistive technology. Assistive technology cuts across all 17 SDGs and is particularly relevant to some.

Assistive Technology is an umbrella term for assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, prostheses, eyeglasses or digital devices, and their related systems and services.

ATscale is a cross-sector global partnership with a mission to improve people's lives through assistive technology. It catalyzes action to ensure that, by 2030, an additional 500 million people in low- and middle-income countries get the life-changing assistive technology they need.

Together, let's ensure young children get the assistive technology they need.