

# Why assistive technology matters for livelihoods

**Mohammad** uses prosthetic legs after walking over a landmine in Myanmar in 1991. In August 2017 he was forced to abandon his prostheses and crutches as he fled his country. On arriving in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, he attached plastic bottles to his legs to pedal a sewing machine so he could continue his livelihood and support his family. It was very challenging until a local health centre fitted him with a new pair of prostheses.

© Humanity & Inclusion/HI



Access to assistive technology can make the difference between failure or success at school, between a job or unemployment, and between a life of opportunity or of dependency. Assistive technology is vital for livelihoods because it leads to improved educational outcomes among younger users, better paid employment and higher productivity among adult users, and the reduction of challenges caused by ageing.

Together, these factors can drive significant increases in lifetime income for assistive technology users and their families with ripple effects that accelerate national-level economic growth. Altogether, providing assistive technology to all who need it today would yield more than US\$10 trillion in economic benefits over the next 55 years.

In low-income countries only

**10%**

of people have the assistive technology they need, in stark contrast to 90% of people in need in high-income countries who do.

For a child in a low- or middle-income country, access to assistive technology can make a difference of

**US\$ 100,000**

in lifetime income.



ATscale's economic model estimates that wheelchairs, hearing aids, eyeglasses and prostheses improve a user's productivity on average by

**16%**



Economic losses related to disability range from between

**3-7%**

of GDP.

# Why assistive technology matters for livelihoods

**Assistive technology supports individuals to find better paid employment and opportunities for livelihoods, and improves productivity, allowing people to earn more money.** People who have assistive technology are better able to perform daily tasks, communicate with colleagues, and engage with equipment, processes, and systems within the workplace. With assistive technology, people are able to work for a longer span of years as improved health outcomes enable them to cope with the challenges of ageing. Particularly in places with weaker social safety nets, this can protect older workers and ensure they maintain a source of income for as long as possible.

**Families have more free time and opportunities to be educated and enjoy their own livelihoods when family members they care for have assistive technology.** Those who support persons with disabilities or impairments, and older people, are often women or girls. When assistive technology is available and accessible, their time and energy is freed up, making this an important gender issue. Meeting the unmet need for assistive technology can enable family supporters to increase their time spent at work, resulting in nearly US\$2 trillion of additional income for families over the users' lifetimes.

**Societies, economies, and countries benefit when people have access to assistive technology.** The individual and familial economic benefits of assistive technology create a powerful multiplier effect that can contribute to lifting assistive technology users out of poverty, while impact ripples out to entire countries. The investments required to strengthen and improve assistive technology service delivery systems and provide assistive products will generate a return of 9:1.



*Inclusion is key to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leave no one behind. There will not be full inclusion while people 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 access to assistive technology to support livelihoods.**