

## 7th ATscale Board Meeting - 21 March 2023

### Decisions, next steps, timelines

- The suggested revisions to the By-laws, including the addition of a non-voting private sector seat are welcomed. Language around the principle of anti-corruption is to be added and the recirculated by-laws will be adopted by written process.
- The board, including all donor representatives, approved the guidelines on the selection of implementing partners. They can be applied in the contracting processes for the 3 non-competitive selections in the 2023 Operational Plan (IDA, ISPO, and GDI Hub). Jon Lomoy will send a letter to UNOPS to inform them of this decision.
- The board took note of the next steps outlined for arriving at concept notes for Senegal and Rwanda and agrees with the proposed direction, including that the approval of the final concept notes - which will be shared as soon as possible - can take place through a written process (email) between board meetings (on a no-objection basis with a two-week timeframe).
- The term of the two unaffiliated board members who transitioned from the interim board will be regarded as starting from the first official board meeting in October 2021.

### Welcome, attendance, adoption of agenda and minutes of the last board meeting

Jon Lomøy welcomed participants and established that the necessary quorum was reached. The draft agenda for the meeting was adopted with adjustments: instead of an Executive Session, a short discussion to clarify term limits for unaffiliated board members would take place. The minutes from the board meeting held on 1 and 2 December 2022 were adopted without changes and can be published on the ATscale website. Going forward, draft minutes can be added to the website if no comments have been received within 2 weeks of the draft being shared with the board.

The Chair especially welcomed HE Yan, Zeinab GURA, Ashllah MMUSI, and Clive ONDARI who were participating for the first time.

### General update & 2022 financial report

Pascal Bijleveld provided an update on ATscale activities and developments since the previous board meeting. The ATscale investment has now been formally launched in **Kenya** alongside the official launch of the national strategic plan for rehabilitation with an event that brought together officials from most counties. The first funds have been released. Following a competitive process, an agreement has been signed for the implementing partner in **Cambodia** with a consortium of CHAI, the Cambodian Disabled Peoples' Organization (CDPO), and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) with CHAI as a lead partner. The agreement for the **Central Asia & Caucasus** investment was signed in early March 2023 and implementation has begun. The ATscale Secretariat is also working closely with UNOPS and USAID on **leveraged funding**. A \$2m eyeglasses program in

**Zambia** should be signed by the end of March. In response to the call for proposals for “pipeline countries”, 13 bids were received and the evaluation is closing. Foundational work is expected to begin in **12 countries from four regions** (East Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Latin America) by end of Q2.

New projects have started in the **Global Public Goods** pillar of ATscale’s work. The research project with GDI Hub and Google to determine the feasibility and impact of mobile phone provision to people requiring AT in LMICs is progressing well. The research will be undertaken in Kenya, India, and Brazil. A number of other projects are near closing the competitive selection processes. Bids for market intelligence work are under evaluation and the project is expected to begin in Q2 2023. The request for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the market access partnership for prosthetics was published in January and is open until 31 December 2023. Four EOIs were submitted by the first review deadline of 1 March. The RFP for the autorefractor study RFP closed on 27 February, bids are currently under evaluation and the project is expected to begin in Q2 2023.

To continue to raise ATscale’s **visibility**, members of the Secretariat attended the 2023 World Economic Forum in Davos and co-organized a number of events (movie premiere, workshop) and are following up on leads created there. The side event “Reaching the Unreached: Boosting Access to Assistive Technology in Low-Resource Countries” at the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) conference was followed by several meetings with potential funders along the East Coast of the US (Chicago, Boston, DC, New York), as well as a panel discussion at the Center for Global Development called “Assistive Technology: Shaping the Global Market and the Path Forward” in Washington, D.C. The Zero Project Conference provided another great opportunity for networking and chairing a roundtable at the first Zero Project Technology Forum.

ATscale has increased its **social media** following and an Instagram channel was launched. A first themed week (hearing) led to new audiences, following, and engagement. The ATscale website was updated and features a translate button on every page. A thorough accessibility check is planned. ATscale’s first annual review provides an overview of achievements in 2022 and a summary of plans for 2023.

The work on **AT user engagement** has been further defined and implementation can start in Q2. The TOR for the **Expert Advisory Group** was advertised and disseminated in December. Over 200 applications have been vetted down to 24 experts that we are in the process of getting on retainer contracts. Baselines for the **M&E Framework** are established for the national indicators (not ATscale specific) and for the Secretariat indicators except for a board survey that will soon be shared. It has been more difficult to establish the baselines for Global AT Sector Strengthening indicators (procurement volumes and resources) and continued follow-up with partners is needed.

Further board meetings are planned for 21 and 22 June in Georgia and 15 and 16 November in Washington, D.C..

Pascal Bijeleveld then presented the **Financial Review for 2021-2022**. At the end of December USD 6.7m were spent or committed. The under-spend compared to the last revised budget was driven by delays in country-level contracting and savings on operation costs. The projections for 2023 are in line with what was presented to the Board in December. The projected cash flow, however, showed that there would be a halt to ATscale starting new investments by Q3 of 2023 if the committed funding is not received before then.

FCDO shared their intention to disburse funds early in their financial year, aiming for their first financial quarter which ends in June 2023, which was warmly welcomed.

Board members discussed the possible impact of the collapse of major banks on the partnership without reaching a conclusion as events are still unfolding but further uncertainty could impact the chances of attracting new donors. When the Partnership Advisor has started, an updated overview of the donor landscape will be one of their first tasks. The resource mobilization group of the board is regularly updated.

## Updates from Partners

UNOPS updated the board on the follow-up to decisions taken at its Executive Board session. Excess reserves accumulated through management fees up to Dec 21 will be credited to UNOPS donors. Given that ATscale was only established in September 2021 this will be a small amount of less than 6,000 USD to be credited to USAID who can decide on its use. A new pricing policy will apply to new agreements or agreements that are amended regarding their duration or budget. UNOPS will keep the board and the ATscale CEO updated on further developments.

## Updates to governance documents

### **Decisions / next steps / follow-up:**

- The suggested revisions to the By-laws, including the addition of a non-voting private sector seat are welcomed. Language around the principle of anti-corruption is to be added and the recirculated by-laws will be adopted by written process.
- The board, including all donor representatives, approved the guidelines on the selection of implementing partners. They can be applied in the contracting processes for the 3 non-competitive selections in the 2023 Operational Plan (IDA, ISPO and GDI Hub). Jon Lomoy will send a letter to UNOPS to inform them of this decision.

Barbara Goedde provided a recap of the **suggested changes to the by-laws** that had been shared with the board for review: to decrease the number of board meetings from 4 to 3 per year and to add a non-voting private sector seat with additional criteria (“not working for (or receiving funding from) any entity in the industries producing alcohol, tobacco, arms, or internationally scheduled substances (“illegal drugs”), nor any entity directly connected to child labour”). The steps and timelines towards the selection of a private sector board member and the expectation that they might be able to join the November board meeting were also presented.

The board welcomed the suggested changes to the **By-laws**, including the addition of a non-voting private sector seat and suggested also adding language around the principle of anti-corruption. The Secretariat will work on this and then circulate the revised By-laws which will then be agreed through written process. Board members also emphasized the importance of active outreach - in which board members can play a role - when the Private Sector Core Group is first constituted. The terminology (providers, private sector) will be reviewed by the Secretariat for clarity, as well as the proposed scope of work, bearing in mind we also want this to be a co-creation process.

The rationale for the **Guidelines on selection of implementing partners** was also given, as well as a brief overview of the two existing methodologies for non-competitive selection (UN2UN agreements and agreements with national governments; Pre-selection by a donor / donors). Two additional methodologies would be added. One would use UNOPS Regulation 118.05 of the Financial Rules and Regulations which sets out exceptions to competitive selections for procurement and would allow the use of those exceptions for grants. Direct selection by ATscale Board in the Operational Plan will be a process specific to ATscale and will require donors to confirm no objection. In all cases, the Secretariat will prepare a justification for the board. It was also pointed out that implementing partners will have to undergo a capacity assessment which includes a due diligence process.

The board, including all donor representatives, approved the guidelines and agreed that they can be applied in the contracting processes for the 3 non-competitive selections it had decided on in the context of the 2023 Operational Plan in the December 2022 board meeting. The board also agreed, including all donor representatives, that the board chair Jon Lomoy would send a letter to UNOPS to inform of this decision.

## Upcoming country programmes

### Decisions / next steps / follow-up:

- The board took note of the next steps outlined for arriving at concept notes for Senegal and Rwanda and agrees with the proposed direction, including that the approval of the final concept notes - which will be shared as soon as possible - can take place through a written process (email) between board meetings (on a no-objection basis with a two-week timeframe).

Pascal Bijleveld presented the current status of preparations for an investment in Senegal and Rwanda which were not quite ready for presentation to the board. **Senegal** is working on a concept note on which there have been two rounds of feedback. The envelope would be USD 3m over 3 years, focusing on mobility and vision. Early in Q2, the incorporation of technical feedback is expected to conclude so that a final concept note can be submitted to the board. A written approval process before the June board meeting is proposed so that a Call for Proposals for partner selection can then be launched.

Pascal Bijleveld recalled that in **Rwanda** the focus is on scaling up hearing aids provision nationwide by building on existing frameworks (National Ear and Hearing Care Plan which is linked to other relevant strategies) and a successful pilot in 4 districts which used hearing aids procurement through the UNICEF catalogue. He met with the Ministry of Health/RBC in Kigali recently as well as key partners, which confirmed the strong government commitment. The investment will support key system strengthening interventions supporting a national scale-up, as well as specific outreach activities in four additional districts. The government has indicated that it would see UNICEF as best placed to implement ATscale investment and if that appears as the best option, a justification for a UN2UN grant to UNICEF would be submitted alongside the concept note. A written process is suggested before the June board meeting.

The board took note of the next steps outlined for arriving at concept notes for Senegal and Rwanda and agreed with the proposed direction, including that the approval of the final concept notes - which will be shared as soon as possible - can take place through a written process (email) between board meetings (on a no-objection basis with a two-week timeframe). UNICEF recused itself from the discussion as they are a likely implementing partner in Rwanda and abstained from a vote. The Secretariat will take into account specific points raised: clarification on how HR capacity will be built in the case of Senegal, as well as re-looking at the proposed targets, which seemed overly ambitious; and exploring whether and how to align with the activities that will be implemented in the context of the LEGO grant to CHAI for AT and early childhood development in Rwanda.

## Plans for UN General Assembly resolution on Assistive Technology

A focus of the Advocacy and Communication Task Team (ACTT) formed in September 2022 is to advocate a UN General Assembly resolution on assistive technology which will contribute to AT being recognized and understood as a broader multi-sectoral issue. This is a collaborative effort: ATscale, WHO, UNICEF, the Global Disability Innovation Hub, the International Disability Alliance, and other stakeholders are committed and working together. Efforts towards such a resolution will in themselves serve to raise awareness of issues around AT for example through proposed high-level meetings and side events at key UN and other international meetings over the next 12 to 18 months. An important first step is to confirm a core group of member state sponsors for this resolution. The board members were very supportive of the efforts. The relevant board members are engaging with their counterparts in the Foreign Ministries to involve their missions in New York. WHO and UNICEF offices in NY are ready to engage with member states and IDA is sharing their expertise in obtaining similar resolutions. The importance of starting with a good briefing on the possible content was stressed while some cautioned that there was fatigue regarding the introduction of additional international days - however, their usefulness in awareness raising for issues that are otherwise less present to the general public was also emphasized.

## Participants

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Representatives and delegates</b>
CDPF	HE Yan
FCDO	Penny Innes Marta Ostrouch
IDA	Jose Viera
Government of KENYA	Zeinab Gura
SAFOD	Ashllah Mmusi
Unaffiliated Board Seats	Jon Lomøy Ana Lucia Arellano Phyllis Heydt
UNICEF	Etleva Kadillii Kristoffer Gandrup-Marino <i>Dennis Soendergaard</i> <i>Fernando Botelho</i> <i>Fiorella Polo</i>
UNOPS (ex-officio)	Jean-Francois Laurent
USAID	Michael Allen
WHO (ex-officio)	Clive Ondari (WHO) Kylie Shae
Excused representatives	Patrick Amoth (Kenya) ZHANG Hongtao (CDPF) Mussa Chiwaula (SAFOD) Andrew Kirkwood (UNOPS) Laurel Fain (USAID)
ATscale secretariat	Pascal Bijleveld (ex-officio member) Barbara Goedde (note taker) <i>Emily Wootton</i> <i>Ceridwen Johnson</i> <i>Anil Kashyap</i> <i>Eduardo Sanchez</i> <i>Mujib Ahmad</i> <i>Dorothee Steinbach</i>
Guests	n/a