

11th ATscale Board Meeting - 4 & 5 June 2024

Decisions, next steps, timelines

- The board gave pertinent strategic direction to the development of ATscale's multi-year strategy. The revised strategy draft will be shared with the board in early October for written feedback over 2 weeks. The final strategy will be presented for approval at the November board meeting, along with an annual work plan.
- The board approved three grant expansions or new grants with no objection from the funding sources:
 - the extension of the agreement with UNICEF Rwanda (addition of vision (previously only hearing and increase by 1.8m to 3m total over 3-4 years);
 - the extension of the AT user engagement work with IDA for a second year at the same level (250K);
 - the addition of Made AT Kenya (Manufacturing and assembling appropriate wheelchairs at scale in Kenya) to the 2024 Operational Plan, the funding of 380K for this activity from the existing budget envelope and approved the direct selection of Motivation Kenya as the implementing partner. The Secretariat will identify milestones and report back to the Board on the progress of the local wheelchair production project in Kenya, addressing questions raised by Board members.
- The board requested the secretariat to go forward with exploring the interest of the Government of Indonesia in joining the board (second programme country seat). The board will take a decision by written process if this exploration results in the expressed interest of Indonesia.
- The board agreed with the proposed understanding of the term "prominent person" in the context of the next ATscale board meeting and its consequences on travel management but decided to revisit the topic again at the next meeting.
- By invitation of the Government of Kenya, the next board meeting will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 19 and 20 November.

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 Chair especially welcomed Sarah Goulding, Assistant Secretary, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and her colleagues who participated for the first time.

The draft agenda was adopted. The minutes from the board meeting held on 5 & 6 March 2024 - which had already been accepted through a written process - were reconfirmed as adopted.

Strategy development consultation

The board dedicated the first day of the board meeting to discuss elements of ATscale's multi-year strategy up to 2027 currently under development which had been put forward by the secretariat based on initial consultations and existing material (e.g. previously approved strategies for resource mobilization, advocacy and communications, revised country engagement approach). The aim is to agree a refreshed and refocused approach to take us through the next three years by the November 2024 board meeting.

The context and ATscale's vision, mission and strategic objectives

After a presentation on the developments in the wider context that ATscale operates in, the board found that the fundamental issues and the core challenge remained constant. Economic arguments are increasingly important and the main points of the *Case for Investing in AT* should be integrated into the strategy. Since ATscale was announced, new actors have entered the sector and ATscale needs to position itself so that roles are clear and duplications are avoided. Similarly, new or accelerated trends e.g. around artificial intelligence and digital technologies need to be taken into account.

Likewise, it was felt that the existing vision, mission, and strategic objectives are still valid and require only minor modifications. The balance between the three strategic pillars (strengthening systems, investing in global public goods, and advocacy/awareness raising) should be aligned with the evolving priorities - but where the balance lies will depend on the strategic direction for global public goods and the resources needed to pursue meaningful change there. The main aims within the third pillar should be seen as the mobilization of resources and of political will rather than advocacy for general awareness raising.

Country engagement model

The secretariat presented ATscale's approach to country level programmes, emphasizing the need to be flexible and context specific as countries will have different needs, e.g. some might need more technical assistance (TA) while most will need TA and resources. Depth and breadth in the approach need to be balanced, considering the trade-offs between meaningful engagement in a single country versus broader engagement across several countries. The secretariat proposes a focus on achieving depth and demonstrating tangible results in existing country engagements before rapidly expanding to new countries but this will depend on whether unearmarked funding can be obtained. The discussion also covered the need for realistic expectations about the pace and impact of efforts, especially as systems strengthening takes a lot of foundational work with a potentially slower uptick in service delivery and direct reach. However, some discussion is needed on what objectives should be met for a decision to continue country programmes beyond the initial three years. The Secretariat will guide countries in setting realistic expectations during the Expression of Interest and Call for Proposal processes to ensure sustainable progress within available resources.

Market shaping and global public goods

The Secretariat presented an overview of the Global Public Goods and market shaping work to date. The six strategic domains of the GPGs were outlined, as well as the importance of learning

from the existing portfolio, focusing efforts, and developing a clear comparative advantage. Concerns are around potential fragmentation and the need for a clear problem statement to guide global investments. In an interactive exercise to express opinions on eight archetypes that ATscale could assume there was a clear preference for “ecosystem convenor” and “global advocate” as well as for “market strategist and shaper” and “financing specialist”. Different challenges might necessitate ATscale to play different roles. The discussion concluded with a proposal to shift focus towards defining and investing in big, transformative ideas, or “big plays,” as a means of achieving meaningful change and bringing partners together around these (convenor). The Secretariat will further develop the concept of “big plays” or transformational challenges in the process of the strategy development and propose specific areas where ATscale could aim for catalytic change through its global work. Certain “big plays” might then require dedicated resource mobilization as additional funding may be required to pursue transformational change.

Role of priority products, theory of change

The secretariat presented the five priority products to discuss their usefulness as a focus. Their value in communicating with a general audience and to partners who might focus on only one area was emphasized. For the country level, the importance of being open to other products and delivery systems as per the local needs was highlighted. Some suggested that all functional domains should be represented through a product, i.e. adding one from self-care and one from communication. The current theory of change was presented and areas for suggested tweaks were discussed but the consensus was that what was needed were adjustments and not a complete rethinking of the theory of change.

Measuring progress & impact

The secretariat recalled that the M&E framework approved in 2022 and in particular global progress towards the 500 million goal was based on the assumption that data from population surveys (rATA) would be available in 2026 from a similar or increased number of countries compared to 2022. As this will not be the case, the secretariat will research potential alternative data sources, explore ways to incorporate data from existing surveys and tools into ATscale's monitoring and evaluation framework, e.g. from the inclusion of AT-related questions in other surveys, and determine whether it is possible to aggregate data to measure global progress towards the 500 million target without a disproportionate investment in data collection beyond the data collection that will happen in countries supported by ATscale. The importance of inclusivity and consultation in data collection, particularly with communities of access to data, was emphasized.

Partnership, partners and roles & responsibilities

The Secretariat presented the current thinking around the partnership with core partners/board members; strategic partners who are engaged across the assistive technology sector and engage frequently with the secretariat at both the strategic and operational levels; and technical and specialized partners who work on one of the current ATscale priority products or a narrow aspect of assistive technology and implementing partners who work on the basis of a contract or a grant. Whether the partnerships with strategic partners should be more formalized was posed

as a question for discussion. There was a general feeling that ATscale could be more proactive in identifying potential new partners but no final conclusion was reached. Some core partners expressed an interest in formalizing the partnership between them and ATscale beyond board participation. Board members commended ATscale for the continuous effort to include Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and the progress made.

General update

On the second day of the board meeting, Pascal Bijleveld provided an update on ATscale activities and developments since the previous board meeting. Highlights included the signing of a donor agreement with DFAT Australia, the first World AT Day, the engagement with the countries selected for new programmes at the last board meeting and new staff joining the ATscale secretariat so that most positions are now filled.

Mid-year review

Satish Mishra presented **progress in countries** that received ATscale support. By the end of 2024, ATscale will have active programs in 28 countries. Satish briefed on the ongoing efforts for selection of new countries in Latin America.

Board members took note of the progress and appreciated the developments so far in first wave countries as well as for new country programmes, e.g. the online information sessions offered prior to the submissions of the expressions of interest, the fact that the programmes targeting school-aged children have in many cases helped increase cooperation between the ministries of health and education around assistive technology, and the increased involvement of OPDs in the coordination at country-level. The board is interested to see the cross-country learning to be turned into documentation/guidance.

Satish Mishra then presented a summary of progress on **Global Public Goods**. GPGs are organized around data and evidence generation, innovation, market shaping, strengthening systems and services, AT financing and capacity building.

As an **update to the 2024 Operational Plan**, the secretariat proposed a new programme focusing on the local production and assembly of wheelchairs in Kenya, with a regional focus on Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa countries, called **Made AT Kenya**. Phase 1 of the program has been successfully completed, and phase 2 has begun. ATscale has been following the progress of this programme since the start of ATscale's support to Kenya, as a potential opportunity to support local production. Motivation, an UK-based NGO operating in Kenya, CHAI (implementing partner in Kenya) and ATscale in collaboration with the Government of Kenya agreed to work on a formal proposal for Phase II and III. This was based on a positive financial evaluation of previous work and phase I of the Motivation project for local wheelchair production and assembly in Kenya. This proposal aims to finalize the production setup and produce the first batch of wheelchairs. ATscale views this program as a potential model for scaling up local wheelchair production regionally, where all component parts can be sourced and assembled locally. The wheelchair that will be produced (IMARA 3-wheelchair) is based on Motivation's proven rough-terrain design and has been adapted for this programme, aiming towards



competitive pricing while maintaining high quality. The total budget for the project is \$1.36 million, with the requested funds (380K) from existing ATscale resources representing 28% of the overall costs. These funds will support phases 2 and 3 over an 18-month period from mid-2024 to the end of 2025, enabling the scale-up and expedited access to the final product.

The government of Kenya reiterated its support for the programme and will be providing tax exemptions - which could also be made available for other companies who would set up production in the country. The board discussed the implementation of a regional distribution hub for Africa, the potential of an assembly project in Kenya attracting international manufacturers, and the importance of local procurement. Some raised concerns about the viability of the project for a number of reasons including: the high overall costs that lead up to the production of one wheelchair model and that the project will not eliminate the need for importation. It was noted, however, that the majority of these costs, including for the development of the revised prototype, is borne by other development partners with ATscale contributing around a quarter of the overall costs. It was noted that the price point for the wheelchair aimed for will be at par with the cost of a similar imported wheelchair unless further scale can be reached which would bring down the price further. The discussion also included added value of local production such as shorter, more reliable supply chains and the value generated in-country, including job creation and opportunities for people with disabilities and society in general. Regarding the genesis of the proposal, some would have preferred an open call for proposals. It was explained that the proposed project fits well with and complements the ongoing ATscale-supported programme in Kenya; has been followed by ATscale since the inception of the Kenya programme; is strongly supported by the government of Kenya; and shows promise for broader regional impact, hence presented a good opportunity to be seized.

Despite some board members having reservations, the board overall agreed for the project to move forward to gain experience and learning opportunities in local production. The Secretariat proposed to monitor the activity with specific checkpoints to ensure alignment with ATscale's strategy and to mitigate risks.

Ceridwen Johnson updated the board on progress on **advocacy and communication** which centers on implementing the Advocacy and Communications strategy approved in June 2022. The communications efforts have included producing thematic briefs and annual reviews, launching the AT Market report, and ramping up social media engagement. The "Unlock The Everyday" campaign, which was launched in Davos in January, has garnered significant interest, with 24 official partners and widespread social media activity. The first World Day for Assistive Technology was celebrated on 4 June with global participation, featuring events in Nairobi, Peru, and Lesotho, and engaging businesses like Google and Microsoft. The campaign saw posts shared in nine languages, securing prominent endorsements from figures like Amy Burk and Ade Adepitan. Moving forward, ATscale plans to leverage the upcoming Paralympic Games and UN General Assembly to further advocate for AT inclusion and investment, including a high-profile reception and a visual campaign in Times Square. Concerns were raised regarding the vetting process of advocacy and marketing materials, and the board was encouraged to increase participation in the Advocacy and Communications Task Team (ACTT) which is intended to



provide a variety of perspectives on the materials and ensure that language, images, and other sensitivities are taken into consideration.

Elaine Zameck updated the board on **resource mobilization**. Since the beginning of the year, ATscale formalized its agreement with the EU and has signed a significant new partnership with DFAT Australia, providing 8.127 million AUD (approximately 5.3 million USD) to enhance ATscale's vision, hearing, and mobility programs in three-four Pacific Island countries and Indonesia. Additionally, ATscale is finalizing an interim funding solution with the UAE's Reaching the Last Mile initiative, following high-level meetings in Abu Dhabi.

The overall funding goal for ATscale remains to raise \$400 million USD by 2030, with an interim target of \$150 million USD by 2027 for the Scale-up phase, half of which has already been secured. Recent conferences, such as the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN) conference in Abu Dhabi and Inclusive Africa, have enhanced exposure and relationship building with potential donors. Notable progress includes reopened discussions with the Qatar Fund for Development, engagements with Safaricom Foundation on vision and hearing programs, and promising dialogues with the Mastercard Foundation in Africa and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) for program expansions in Southeast Asia.

Barbara Goedde presented updates to the monitoring framework in the context of the development of the new multi-year strategy. ATscale will align its results framework and Theory of Change (ToC) with the new strategy, refining categories and indicators to measure the impact of its initiatives and may need to rely more on data from ATscale-supported programmes to inform the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework. She presented the definition of 'direct reach' and 'indirect beneficiaries' and first preliminary numbers. In two countries which have reported 731,111 people have been reached with AT services and 2,270,000 were reached indirectly. 142,572 people were reached with assistive products. 1,491 professionals and personnels have been trained in eight countries with a potential indirect reach of 4,473,000 per year and 69 organizations have been strengthened in 12 reporting countries.

The overall approach to measure 'reach' was welcomed by the Board. There was a discussion on definitions and in particular services such as screening vs rehabilitation, and how they should be accounted for in terms of reach.

Eduardo Sanchez Mera presented updates on the **budget and finances**. The 2024 operational plan budget has been updated to incorporate the recent DFAT contribution. The initial budget of USD 27.6 million has been increased to USD 29 million, primarily due to new funding that supports the inclusion of Pacific countries and minor downward adjustments to operational costs. This update also reflects an increase in country-level programme funding, rising from 64% to 67% of the total budget. Additionally, there is a reduction in overall fees for new contributions of 3%, down from 6%.

As of 31 May commitments were at 16% against the budget and at 90% against available cash, with significant commitments expected to ramp up in Q3 and Q4 due to the launch of new activities and the finalization of new grants. The financial outlook indicates a total income of 29.6



million USD for the year, with commitments projected at 28.1 million USD, ensuring balanced cash flow and resource allocation throughout the year. The Secretariat has 17 positions, adding one post supported by the DFAT contribution, with ongoing recruitment for the final roles.

The board discussed the need to include AT users in the secretariat and heard about the efforts to make job descriptions more suitable as well as increased outreach. The suggested changes to the budget as well as the direct selections of UNICEF Rwanda (expanded scope), IDA (year 2) and Motivation Kenya were approved.

Governance

Currently only one of the three Programme Country seats is filled - by Kenya. The secretariat suggested adding one seat for Asia from among partner countries. Exploratory initial discussions with the Government in Indonesia suggests a strong interest. The board agreed that the secretariat can take these discussions further and that the board would take a decision through a written process in the case of a positive outcome of those discussions. A third country is to be explored following the conclusion of the call for the Expression of Interest (EOI) process in Latin America, which would allow for a balance in regional representation.

The ATscale Secretariat sought board approval to define "prominent person" for travel exceptions (possible business class travel). Currently, no request for exceptions have been processed due to a lack of clarity. The Secretariat proposes that "prominent person" be defined as current government officials from ATscale-supported programme countries at the level of a minister or one level below. This interpretation would allow such senior officials, upon request, to travel business class for flights over 8 hours, subject to UNOPS process and approval. This change aims to facilitate high-level participation from senior officials, who have demanding schedules, ensuring their effective involvement in board meetings. The discussion focused on how to avoid an explosion of the cost of board meetings without creating inequity in how board members are treated. It was decided to accept the secretariat proposal as practice for the next board meeting (in November in Kenya) but to table this topic again with a projection for the costs of different scenarios.

Updates from partners

Kylie Shae provided updates on WHO's work in assistive technology. A significant highlight was the WHO and Ireland's global agreement focused on improving access to assistive technology using digital technology, emphasizing the importance of strengthening access across five interconnected pillars: people, policy, products, provision, and personnel (the 5 P). The agreement is for \$12.5 over 5 years. Planned activities include advocacy and awareness campaigns, building on the Global Report on Assistive Technology, and stimulating innovation and investment in digital technologies that can support improved access. This includes national, regional, and global projects aimed at implementing these initiatives. Examples include: hosting the GATE Summit in 2025, where a Global AT Roadmap may be launched; organizing a Digital EXPO in Ireland in 2026 and 2028; and continuous data collection and the use of WHO's Assistive Technology Assessment (ATA) toolkit to measure need, capacity, impact, and progress.



Jose Viera updated the board on the findings of an investigative review at IDA commissioned by a key donor, which identified areas for improvement in governance, decision-making processes, financial and internal control systems, and HR policies. In response, the IDA Board, along with the Secretariat, has implemented measures to address these issues, including an early election of the Executive Committee, the appointment of an interim executive director, and work on developing policies in response to the review's findings. He highlighted the need for transparency, accountability, and commitment. The board expressed their hope that IDA can successfully implement these changes and come out stronger.

Participants

Organization	Representatives and delegates
CDPF	ZHANG Hongtao HE Weije (interpreter)
DFAT	Sarah Goulding (online) Kathleen Bombell (online) Helena Woods (online)
FCDO	Penny Innes
IDA	Jose Viera
Kenya	Alexander Kisayanga (online)
Private Sector	Shona McDonald
SAFOD	Ashllah Mmusi
Unaffiliated Board Seats	Jon Lomøy Ana Lucia Arellano Phyllis Heydt (online)
UNICEF	Kristoffer Gandrup-Marino Dennis Soendergaard (online)
UNOPS (ex-officio)	Andrew Kirkwood
USAID	Laurel Fain Michael Allen Linda Thumb (online)
WHO (ex-officio)	Deus Mubangizi (opening) Kylie Shae Tone Skaud (Day 1)
<i>Excused representatives</i>	<i>Patrick Amoth</i> <i>Mussa Chiwaula</i>
ATscale secretariat	Pascal Bijleveld (ex-officio member) Barbara Goedde (note taker) <i>Satish Mishra</i> <i>For part of the meeting:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ceridwen Johnson</i> • <i>Elaine Zameck</i> • <i>Eduardo Sanchez Mera</i>