2025

Annual Review

Strengthening systems, scaling momentum

ATscale
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
Hosted by UNOPS

Annual Review contributors

The ATscale Annual Review 2025 was produced by the ATscale Secretariat team under the guidance of Pascal Bijleveld, ATscale Chief Executive Officer, and the leadership of Barbara Goedde, Ceridwen Johnson, Aurelie Rigaud and Tabitha Icuga Topp. The report benefited from valuable contributions from ATscale Secretariat colleagues: Mujib Ahmad, Julia Amadio, Ranjavati Banerji, Henri Bonnin, Anil Kashyap, Satish Mishra, Karen Reyes, Leah Sakura, Eduardo Sanchez Mera, Kinley Wangmo and Elaine Zameck. Information and data management support by Hashmat Hanifi, editing by Jennifer Ferguson-Mitchell, graphic design by Luciana Belén Centurión Racciatti.

Disclaimers

The results presented in this publication were reported by ATscale-supported partners, then consolidated and quality assured by the ATscale Secretariat. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the United Nations, its donor agencies or United Nations Member States. Furthermore, the boundaries, names and designations used in the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, ATscale or partner countries.

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Acknowledgements

This report reflects the progress achieved in 2025 through the shared commitment of a broad community of partners working to increase access to assistive technology globally.

ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, expresses its sincere appreciation to its donors for their sustained support and generous contributions, which enable the Partnership to advance its strategic priorities and deliver results.

ATscale is equally grateful to the members of its Board for their continued engagement, strategic counsel, leadership and advocacy over the past year. Particular thanks go to Board Chair Jon Lomøy, as well as to those members who have accompanied ATscale since its inception, including the International Disability Alliance (IDA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Their long-standing commitment has helped shape the Partnership's direction and strengthen its impact.

The Partnership also recognizes the essential contribution of its implementing partners. Their technical expertise, contextual knowledge and dedication are fundamental to translating strategy into meaningful change, ensuring that assistive technology reaches those who need it most. National governments in partner countries remain central to this work. Their leadership in fostering enabling policies and financing environments, and in elevating assistive technology on national agendas, underpins sustainable and lasting progress.

ATscale further acknowledges the vital role of assistive technology users and organizations of persons with disabilities. Their lived experience, insight and advocacy inform and strengthen every aspect of the Partnership's work, helping to ensure that interventions are relevant, appropriate and responsive to real needs.

As ATscale's host organization, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide indispensable operational support, enabling the efficient and effective delivery of ATscale's initiatives. The Partnership extends its appreciation to UNOPS for its ongoing collaboration and stewardship.

To all who have contributed their expertise, time and commitment over the past year, ATscale offers its sincere thanks and looks forward to continued partnership in the shared endeavour to increase access to assistive technology and to unlock opportunity for all.

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momentum wheels for humanity creating mobility & expanding lives

motivation

Sightsavers

SAFOD Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled

STEPS consulting social

unicef

UN WOMEN

UNDRR UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

World Health Organization

[1] USAID funding ended in March 2025 with the agency's dissolution.

Forewords

The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP

Government of Australia, Minister for International Development, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Australia's approach to international development reflects our Australian values. Central to this is equality and the value that everyone should get a fair go. This is why disability equity is central to the work we do – because we are committed to building societies where everyone can participate fully, regardless of the circumstances they were born into.

Inclusive societies are stronger and more resilient. They not only contribute to the stability of local communities, but to the stability of our entire region. Investments in assistive technology are imperative to building these inclusive societies – to helping people living with disability to access opportunities to learn, work and thrive.

Assistive technology can be life changing. It can mean the difference between a child attending school or missing out on a positive start in life. Technology such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, prostheses and other assistive devices enable people to communicate, to move, to learn and to earn. It also reduces the unpaid care burden which disproportionately falls on women and girls – opening up opportunities for entire families and communities.

The economic case is clear. Every dollar invested in assistive technology delivers a ninefold return, and access from childhood can increase lifetime earnings by up to US$100,000 in low- and middle-income countries. This is an investment in people – and in shared prosperity.

Yet access to assistive technology remains deeply unequal. In some low-income countries, only three per cent of people who require assistive technology can access it. In parts of the Pacific, just five to fifteen per cent of needs are being met. This is not just a service gap – it is a structural barrier to opportunity and progress. This is why ATscale's work is so important. First and foremost, for improving the affordability of and access to assistive technology. But also for its model, which builds the capacity of communities to embed lasting change. ATscale strengthens national systems and brings together partners to scale up what works. This is the kind of practical, country-led investment that is needed to close the gap.

Australia is proud to partner with ATscale through our AUD$16.5 million (US$10.5 million) investment. Together, we are expanding access to vision, hearing and mobility products for school-aged children across the Indo-Pacific. We are supporting early screening and intervention and we're strengthening the capacity, systems and coordination of workforces – ensuring impact that lasts.

This annual review highlights strong progress. But it is also a call to action. We have the evidence. We have the partnerships. Now we must accelerate delivery – to ensure access to affordable, quality assistive technology which is a catalyst for opportunity, inclusion and resilience across our region.

Pascal Bijleveld

Chief Executive Officer, ATscale

In every region of the world, assistive technology is transforming lives. Yet for too many of the 2.5 billion people who need assistive technology globally, access to these essential products and services remains out of reach. Closing this gap is one of the most urgent and achievable opportunities to enable people with functional limitations and the ageing population to participate in education, work and community life.

When ATscale began operations in 2021, our task was to build the foundations for a global assistive technology ecosystem – making the case, forging the partnerships, proving the concept. In 2025, I am proud to say that we have moved decisively beyond that phase. We are now seeing governments take the lead, embedding assistive technology into their own policies, budgets and health systems. Countries like Tajikistan, Georgia and Senegal are increasing their national budgets for assistive technology by orders of magnitude. Kenya established its first public optical laboratory and a national assistive technology dashboard. Our new digital platform ATconnect attracted over 2,600 users in its first month, connecting the global community around shared evidence and tools. In parallel, landmark policy briefs developed with ILO, UNICEF, UN Women and UNDRR have positioned assistive technology as a cross-sectoral imperative – not a niche concern but a driver of employment, education, gender equality and climate resilience. This is the systems approach in action: country ownership, global tools and collective advocacy reinforcing one another.

Yet I must be candid – 2025 was also one of our most challenging years. Shifting global priorities put the assistive technology agenda at growing risk. Many traditional donors have reduced their budgets and this has affected ATscale. These headwinds constrained our intended programme expansion and remind us that progress is never guaranteed. To counter this risk, ATscale must be even more innovative, efficient and compelling in demonstrating the value of what we do.

That is exactly what programmes like the Unlock Healthy Learning initiative show is possible. Backed by a strong financial contribution from the Australian Government, this programme is bringing coordinated assistive technology services to children across seven Pacific Island countries – proof that when governments lead and partners come together around a shared vision, we can reach even the most remote communities. It is this spirit of collective action that will carry us forward.

Executive summary

Today, 2.5 billion people worldwide require at least one type of assistive product – from eyeglasses and hearing aids to wheelchairs and digital tools. As this number is projected to exceed 3.5 billion by 2050, ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, continues its mission to ensure that, by 2030, an additional 500 million people in low- and middle-income countries receive the life-changing technology they need. In 2025, the second year of its 2024–2027 Strategy, the Partnership achieved a decisive shift from building foundations to delivering results at scale while navigating a challenging financial landscape.

ATscale works to raise awareness of the transformative potential of assistive technology in everyday lives. Policies and investments are needed to ensure that everyone can get the assistive technology they need, amputee athletes included.

© World Amputee Football

Supporting country plans

ATscale's country engagement represents the majority of its investments, reflecting a commitment to sustainable, government-led system strengthening. As of 2025, the Partnership has reached nearly 2.6 million people (46 per cent women and girls) with assistive technology, engaging with 29 countries, through a comprehensive package of interventions, including 14 scale-up, 12 foundational and three humanitarian programmes.

In 2025, significant progress has been achieved in ATscale's main areas of interventions:

- **Increased assistive technology availability and access**. ATscale has been addressing both supply-side and demand-side barriers by expanding services and infrastructure. Progress in 2025 included the launch of Kenya's first public optical laboratory at Kenyatta National Hospital. In Cambodia, the strengthening of 21 vision centres significantly improved access in rural communities.
- **Fostering governance and assistive technology frameworks**. In 2025, eight regional multisectoral committees on disability and assistive technology were established in Senegal, while other countries such as Cambodia officially adopted their national priority assistive product list (APL).
- **Increased financial coverage and funding for assistive technology**.

ATscale advocated for policies that safeguard assistive technology in national budgets and insurance structures. Successes this year include Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan achieving budget increases for assistive technology of over 30 per cent, while Senegal demonstrated strong ownership by allocating approximately US$4.3 million to its General Directorate of Social Action.

- **Workforce shortages addressed**. ATscale partners continued to build workforce capacity, training a cumulative total of 13,300 people (51 per cent female) such as community health workers, health and education personnel, and representatives of government and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- **Strengthening national data systems**. ATscale worked to integrate assistive technology indicators into existing national frameworks to inform evidence-based decisions. Progress in 2025 was exemplified by Kenya's launch of the National Assistive Technology Dashboard, which integrates facility-level and real-time data from the national health information system to track service delivery.
- **Integration of assistive technology into humanitarian settings**. ATscale worked in 2025 to ensure that essential assistive products are available within days of a crisis. Following the March 2025 earthquake in Myanmar, UNICEF deployed four pre-positioned assistive technology kits containing over 2,000 products, such as wheelchairs and crutches, to benefit displaced populations.

In addition, in 2025, ATscale **gathered lessons from its foundational support programmes** conducted in 12 countries. These show that while ATscale partners successfully mobilized political will, future efforts require longer commitment periods and early government engagement to ensure lasting policy uptake.

Finally, ATscale generated significant new momentum in **Pacific Island countries** through the launch of the SPARK programme under its Unlock Healthy Learning initiative. Backed by a US$10.5 million investment from Australia, this three-year initiative coordinates assistive technology and rehabilitation services for school-aged children across seven countries in the region.

Strengthening global enablers

Global enablers address systemic barriers – such as fragmented markets and weak evidence – that no single country can solve alone. ATscale develops shared tools, standards and guidance to move from ad hoc provision to integrated, nationally led systems.

ATscale has been working towards developing **policy briefs with UN agencies** to position assistive technology as a fundamental requirement for global development.

The findings of four briefs produced in 2025 indicate that:

- **Employment**. Assistive technology combined with universal design, inclusive workplace policies and culture plays a key role in facilitating equitable access to employment.
- **Education**. Assistive technology can remove most of the physical and communication barriers that prevent learners with functional difficulties from participating in their schooling.
- **Disaster risk reduction**. Assistive technology is a tool for survival, evacuation and resilience and needs to be included in international and national emergency preparedness and response systems.
- **Gender equality**. Assistive technology empowers women's autonomy and reduces the disproportionate unpaid care burden often borne by female family members.

To translate evidence into impact, ATscale continued in 2025 to develop its four priority action areas.

- **Build sustainable assistive product markets**. ATscale published its 2025 assistive products market report which covered 25 organizations, 170 suppliers and 200 products. Together with earlier reports, it will enable governments and partners to make more informed, cost-effective procurement decisions, as well as to estimate the size of the unmet demand and analyse the cost of drivers. In Cambodia and Togo, ATscale supported regional distribution hubs to localize supply chains and increase sustainability.
- **Bring services to everyone, everywhere**. A study on handheld autorefractors – portable vision-screening devices – was carried out, while the WHO implementation handbook for integrated school screening to simplify care models was published. In parallel, the online platform ATconnect was launched, featuring more than 450 resources and 400 global programmes related to assistive technology.
- **Remove financial barriers**. Work was undertaken on domestic financing strategies and an investment case methodology to help governments move from viewing assistive technology as a 'charity cost' to a high-return socio-economic investment.
- **Leverage the power of digital assistive technology**. A joint study with Google and GDI Hub demonstrated that smartphones are affordable, scalable assistive tools that increase independence when combined with digital skills training.

ATscale is supporting research to recognize smartphones as digital assistive technology, and efforts to make them more affordable and accessible to users.

© GDI Hub

Advocating for change

Advocacy efforts in 2025 focused on building the political will and public awareness necessary to mobilize resources and increase access to assistive technology globally.

- **Catalysing advocacy and global momentum**. The second World Day for Assistive Technology (4 June 2025) reached over 42 million people – an 18-fold increase over the previous year. The campaign featured user-led storytelling through the MeAndMyAT Challenge.
- **Developing strategic partnerships and high-level engagement**. The appointment of ATscale's first Goodwill Ambassador and high-profile engagement at the Global Disability Summit, World Health Assembly, World Summit on Social Development and COSP18 positioned assistive technology firmly within mainstream development agendas.

Looking ahead

The progress achieved in 2025 confirms that a systems approach works – but sustaining momentum requires continued investment and collective action. ATscale will deepen engagement in priority countries, moving from foundational support to implementation at scale with a stronger emphasis on integrating assistive technology into national systems for health, education and social protection. Strengthening government ownership and co-financing will be central to ensuring sustainability.

At the global level, ATscale will prioritize the uptake of tools, guidance and market-shaping efforts, ensuring these drive tangible change. From a resource mobilization perspective, ATscale will also diversify its funding base to mitigate the risks exposed by the loss of key donors in 2025.

Critically, ATscale will continue to amplify the voices of assistive technology users and strengthen partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, ensuring lived experience shapes policy and programme design. The growing global movement – evidenced by the strong engagement around World Day for Assistive Technology and ATscale's expanding partner network – provides a solid foundation.

By strengthening systems, deepening partnerships and sustaining collective advocacy, ATscale will accelerate progress towards a world in which everyone who needs assistive technology can access it through a supportive ecosystem – and gain the life-changing ability to participate fully in education, employment and community life.

About ATscale

ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, is a cross-sectoral global partnership with the mission to transform people's lives through assistive technology.

The Partnership brings together governments, assistive technology users, non-governmental organizations, bilateral donors, the private sector and multilateral organizations to increase awareness and political will, and encourage innovation and investment in assistive technology markets, systems and services. Today, 2.5 billion people globally need at least one type of assistive technology. In low- and middle-income countries, 65 to 95 per cent of those needing products, such as wheelchairs, eyeglasses, hearing aids and prostheses, remain without access, while in high-income countries this drops to only ten per cent. The need is growing fast, with the number of people who require assistive technology globally likely to rise above 3.5 billion by 2050.

ATscale catalyses 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 through a multisectoral systems approach. Since its concept launch at the first Global Disability Summit in July 2018 in London, the Partnership has advanced from building a strong foundation for the advancement of assistive technology to realizing sustained momentum.

Assistive technology transforms lives: Meerab, 14, hears audible words for the first time through her new hearing aids in Pakistan. ATscale works with partners to ensure that millions more children like Meerab can access the assistive technology they need.

© UNICEF/UNI561149/ Aliraza Khatri

The 2024–2027 Strategy marks ATscale's scale-up phase. Its second year of implementation completed, strategic ambition is now being translated into concrete actions, expanding the Partnership's country and global reach, while deepening impact. Through this, it is accelerating delivery and strengthening the systems and partnerships needed to achieve steady progress through 2027 and beyond.

ATscale drives progress across three mutually reinforcing strategic pillars:

Pillar 1

Supporting country plans and their implementation to strengthen assistive technology policies, systems, services and financing in 38 countries.

Pillar 2

Strengthening global enablers through tools, resources and market development that countries need to ensure reliable access to quality, affordable products.

Pillar 3

Advocating for change to advance political will, build public awareness and increase investment in assistive technology.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is an umbrella term covering the systems and services related to the delivery of assistive products. Assistive products include devices, equipment, instruments and software, specially designed and produced or generally available, whose purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence and to facilitate participation. Examples include wheelchairs, eyeglasses, hearing aids, prostheses, and digital devices and software. Access to assistive technology can enable people to move, communicate, hear and see.

ATscale highlights

Overview of impact from inception to 2025

People reached with assistive technology

2,568,109[2] (46% Female)

Indirect reach: 8,149,682[3]

People reached with assistive products

314,950 (42% Female)

Indirect reach: 995,983

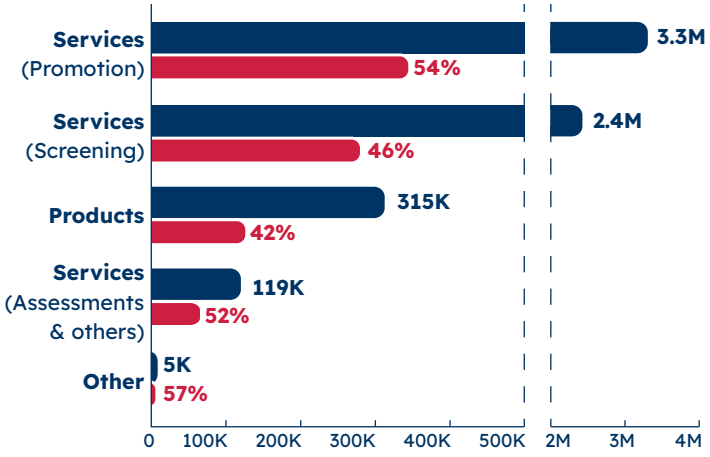
Supporting country plans

Strengthening assistive technology policies, systems, services and financing.

People reached with assistive technology[4]

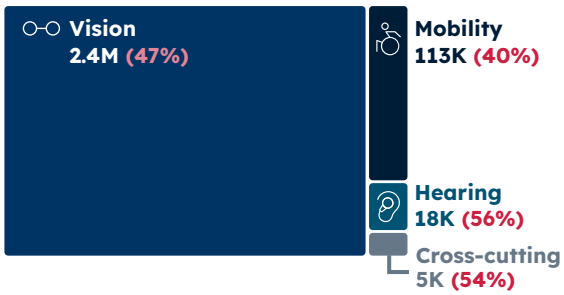
By intervention

% Female



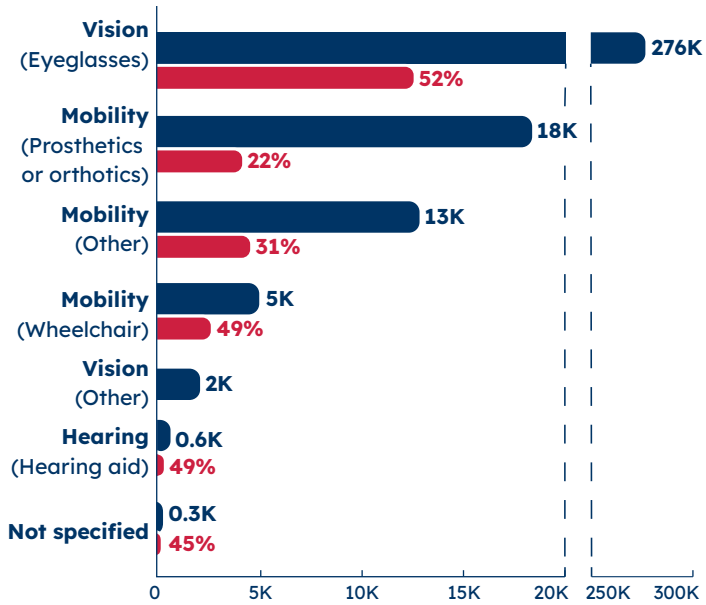
By functional domain

% Female



People reached with assistive products

% Female

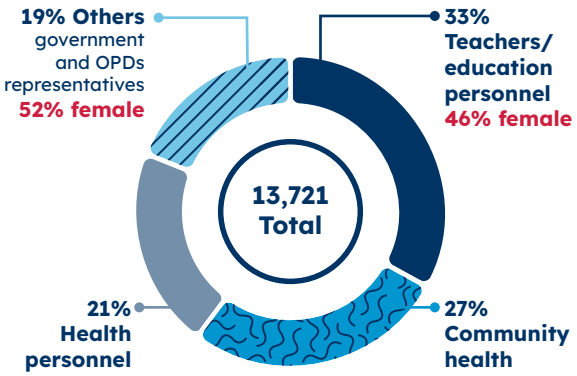


Humanitarian aid

Over 2,000 assistive products provided in Myanmar

People trained: 13,721 (51% female)

Indirect reach: 27,442,000[5]



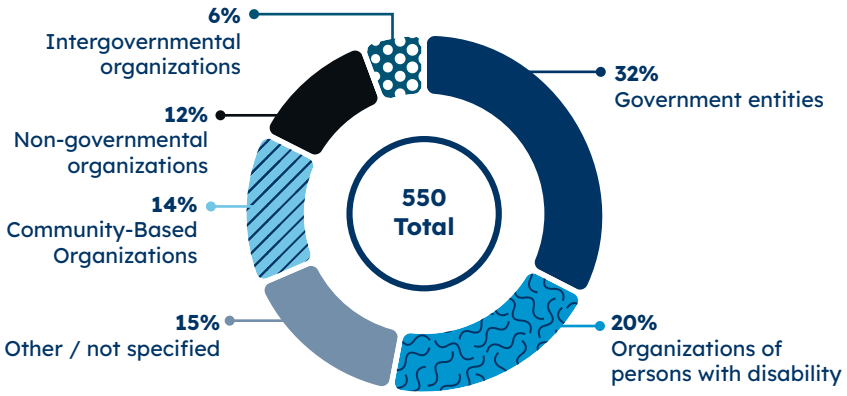
[2] People reached with assistive technology are those receiving products and/or services - including screening, clinical assessment, fitting and maintenance.

[3] Estimated indirect reach reflects additional individuals within the households of those directly benefiting from assistive technology, and is calculated using a country's average household size.

[4] The sum of people reached across each intervention and/or functional domains controls for potential double counting of individuals who might have received several interventions and several functional domains.

[5] Indirect reach is the average estimated number of individuals served by each trained person during a one-year period.

Organizations strengthened: 550



Strengthening global enablers

Improving the availability of affordable, high-quality products and expanding access to up-to-date evidence and practical guidance for inclusive services.

4 landmark policy briefs produced

in partnership with UN agencies set out the cross-cutting relevance of assistive technology for:

- Employment
- Gender equality
- Education
- Disaster risk reduction and climate action

8 reports published including:

- The 2025 Assistive Products Market Report
- Guidance for market entry
- Study on handheld autorefractor technologies
- The Vision and hearing screening for school-age children implementation handbook

ATconnect launch:

A global platform for assistive technology:

- **450+ resources**
- **400 programmes**
- **2,600+ visitors** in its first month

ATconnect
UNLOCKING A WORLD OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

Global reach:

- **6 webinars** organized
- **2,000+ participants** from **50+ countries**

Assistive Products Market Report 2025

- **25 organizations**
- **170 suppliers**
- **200 products**

Advocating for change

Raising public awareness, building political will, and mobilizing resources to advance global access to assistive technology.

Digital platforms

11,000+ followers
across all social media platforms

2,750 new followers

↑ **33% growth**

60,000 website visitors

↑ **41% increase from 2024**

Strategic engagement

25 global events
had assistive technology on their agendas.

14 users of assistive technology
participated in high-level events, with ATscale support

Appointed ATscale's inaugural **Goodwill Ambassador**

↑ **high-profile appearance at the Global Citizen Festival**

Unlock The Everyday

42+ million people reached on World Day for Assistive Technology

↑ **18x increase from 2024**

200+ assistive technology users shared their personal stories through the MeAndMyAT challenge

50+ countries
celebrated the day

11 languages
used to communicate digital content

World map of ATscale-supported programmes

ATscale footprint as of 31 December 2025

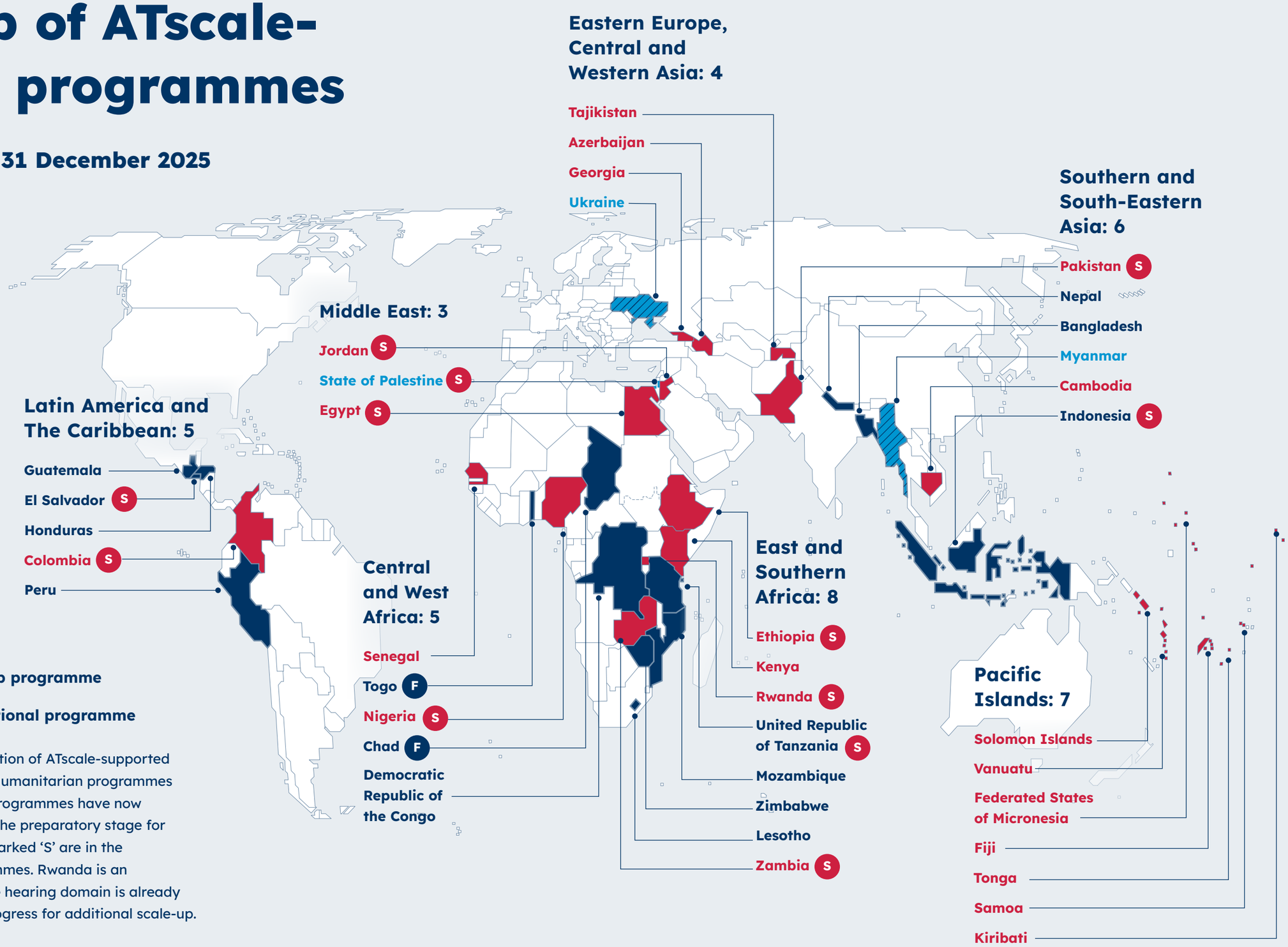
Programme types:

- **Scale-up: 14**
- **Foundational: 12**
- **Humanitarian: 3**

Lower-middle-income countries: 22

Upper-middle-income countries: 10

Low-income countries: 6



S Preparatory stage for scale-up programme

F Preparatory stage for foundational programme

The map shows the geographic distribution of ATscale-supported programmes as of 31 December 2025. Humanitarian programmes were completed, and all foundational programmes have now concluded. Countries marked 'F' are in the preparatory stage for foundational programmes. Countries marked 'S' are in the preparatory stage for scale-up programmes. Rwanda is an exception: a scale-up programme in the hearing domain is already underway, while preparations are in progress for additional scale-up.

Pillar 1:

Supporting country plans

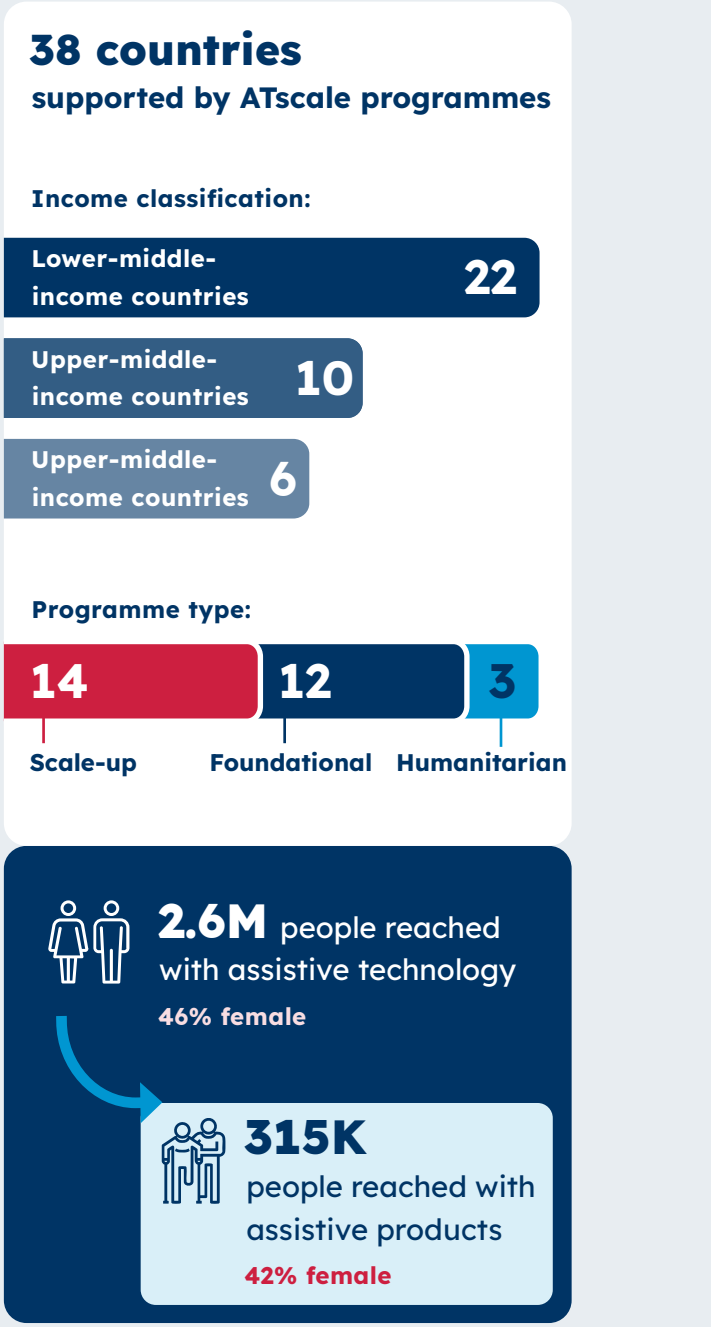
Enabling access to assistive technology through system strengthening and local leadership

An inclusive team assembles wheelchairs for local distribution at a workshop in Kenya.

© Walkabout Foundation

Country engagement represents the majority of ATscale's investments, reflecting a commitment to sustainable, government-led system strengthening. All activities reported under Pillar 1 are led by country governments and are carried out by ATscale partners. To date ATscale has engaged with 38 countries in a comprehensive approach to build robust, inclusive assistive technology ecosystems – including specific interventions in humanitarian contexts.[6] Through these strategic partnerships, ATscale has reached more than **2.5 million people** (46 per cent female) with screenings, referrals and diagnostics; and with access to life-changing assistive products and services.

System strengthening, through a people-centric and multisectoral approach, lies at the heart of these investments, carried out in direct collaboration with national governments, OPDs and other civil society organizations, and international development partners. This approach requires coordinated investment in interconnected building blocks – governance, financing, service delivery, workforce, supply chains and data systems – to ensure that national assistive technology systems function efficiently and cohesively, and are centred around the needs of the people they serve.



[6] Implementation status of ATscale-supported programmes: 15 completed, 14 ongoing and 9 in preparatory stage. Five countries had completed foundational or humanitarian programmes and are transitioning into scale-up programmes.

In-country partners

Scale-up programmes

- Clinton Health Access Initiative (Cambodia, Kenya)
- Fred Hollows Foundation (Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga)
- Humanity & Inclusion (Cambodia)
- Sightsavers (Zambia)
- UNICEF (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Rwanda, Vanuatu)
- WHO Regional Office for Africa (Senegal)
- WHO Regional Office for Europe (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan)
- WHO Regional Office for Western Pacific (Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga)

Foundational programmes

- Clinton Health Access Initiative (Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe)
- Helen Keller International (Bangladesh, Nepal)
- HelpAge International (Indonesia, United Republic of Tanzania)
- Momentum Wheels for Humanity (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru)

Humanitarian programmes

- Humanity & Inclusion (Myanmar)
- Momentum Wheels for Humanity (Myanmar)
- UNICEF (Myanmar)

Increased assistive technology availability and access

ATscale supports coordinated national and global efforts to improve equitable access to high-quality, affordable and appropriate assistive products and their associated services in low- and middle-income countries. This includes working with assistive technology users, governments, OPDs and other civil society organizations, service providers, manufacturers, researchers and other stakeholders.

Assistive technology service delivery refers to a set of person-centred processes which enable individuals with functional limitations to effectively access and use assistive products. These include screening, assessment, provision, fitting, training, maintenance, repair and follow-up. Effective service delivery is fundamental to the assistive technology systems approach. It ensures that products are safe, appropriate and responsive to individual needs, preferences and contexts. Without appropriate services such as assessment and fitting, a product may be the wrong size or impossible to use. Without user training and follow-up, optimal use and long-term adherence are compromised. Likewise, without maintenance and repair services, products are often prematurely abandoned. It is essential, therefore, that these services are affordable, accessible, good quality and available locally, so that every user receives the right product for their specific needs. It is also imperative that these services equally reach women, men, girls and boys in need across rural and urban settings.

ATscale strengthens service delivery by supporting the integration of assistive technology into national health systems, education and social protection systems; and by investing in infrastructure, equipment and workforce capacity. The Partnership also drives innovation through new outreach methods and research into advanced screening and follow-up options.

ATscale also invests in and promotes local production of assistive products and regional hubs where feasible. In addition to improving the reliability of the supply chain, it supports the development and implementation of policies to minimize import costs and create local jobs.

Rwanda

The Ear and Hearing Care programme led by the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (Ministry of Health), with technical support from UNICEF Rwanda, has equipped 83 health facilities with primary audiology equipment for screening. Five district hospitals outside Kigali have also received high-tech audiology equipment, decentralizing services and reducing travel burden. Following the screening of children at school, almost 2,000 consulted an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist since the start of the programme, with over 500 fitted with digital hearing aids, improving their quality of life and educational integration.

Cambodia

The Government was supported by CHAI to strengthen its policy environment and establish or upgrade seven vision centres located in referral hospitals – bringing the total number of vision centres to 21. This scale-up was aided by the procurement of 53,000 eyeglasses and the local production of prostheses and orthoses, significantly improving access to high-quality assistive products in rural communities.

In Cambodia, mobile outreach services across 76 districts provide essential mobility devices, custom fittings and repairs to over 5,200 persons with disabilities.

© National Program for Eye Health, MoH Cambodia

Zambia

The Refractive Error and Assistive Technology Community Health programme was led by the Government of Zambia, with technical support from Sightsavers and other partners. It delivered significant results in expanding access to refractive error and assistive technology services before its suspension (due to USAID withdrawal) in March 2025. More than 150,000 individuals were screened, resulting in more than 8,700 referrals for refractive errors and more than 5,000 referrals for other eye conditions, with nearly 6,000 pairs of eyeglasses dispensed. With a new donor on board, the programme will restart in 2026.

Kenya

The Ministry of Health, with support from CHAI, provided 125,522 (55 per cent female) individuals with screening and diagnostic services, and assistive product delivery. More than 70,000 vision screenings and 15,000 hearing screenings were carried out – including 1,100 newborns. Those identified as needing AT are now being referred to receive the support they require. Wheelchair distribution was expanded to all 47 counties. These gains are underpinned by strengthened procurement and supply chains as well as infrastructure investments. This includes the launch of Kenya's first public optical lab at Kenyatta National Hospital, and a new prostheses and orthoses (P&O) workshop at the hospital, which has increased its P&O service capacity from a daily average of 4.5 to 22 persons.

A healthcare worker conducts a school-based hearing screening to support the early identification of hearing loss.

© CHAI Kenya

Boubacar’s story: From isolation to inclusion in Senegal

After losing his right leg to a snake bite at the age of six, Boubacar Barry spent nine years navigating rough streets on crutches, unable to attend school.

© WHO Senegal

When Boubacar Barry lost his right leg due to a snake bite at the age of six, his world shrank. Without access to a prosthesis, the young orphan spent nine years navigating rough, inaccessible streets on crutches, unable to attend school. “I was sad all the time,” he recalls. “I thought I would never walk like other children again.”

Boubacar is one of 1,389 people in Senegal who accessed life-changing assistive technology through Bokk Naa Ci (“I am involved” in Wolof), an ambitious national programme launched in 2023 by Senegal’s National Centre for Orthopaedic Services, supported by ATscale in partnership with WHO and UNICEF. The programme aims to break down barriers to assistive technology for mobility, vision and hearing across the country.

A video highlighting Boubacar’s situation reached the Ministry of Family, Social Action and Solidarity, which connected him with the programme. After personalized assessments, a custom prosthesis was carefully made, fitted and tested. His first steps were joyful: “Auntie, look, I am walking!” he exclaimed.

Today, Boubacar is back in school, with classmates helping him catch up. He dreams of studying commerce and building a brighter future.

With the Senegalese government committing US$5.8 million and a target of reaching 50,000 people awaiting vision, hearing and mobility services, Bokk Naa Ci is demonstrating what strong national leadership, combined with coordinated global partnership, can achieve.

> **“My life has completely changed, I’m no longer excluded.”**

Boubacar has now returned to the classroom and can walk to school from his home with his custom-made and carefully fitted prosthesis.

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Fostering governance and assistive technology frameworks

Given the cross-cutting nature of assistive technology, a key priority of ATscale-supported programmes is the establishment or strengthening of national coordination platforms and technical working groups. These support the planning and implementation of the assistive technology agenda in alignment with existing government structures. A focal ministry convenes implementing partners and key stakeholders. This includes relevant ministries, OPDs and other civil society organizations, development partners and the private sector. This multistakeholder and multisectoral approach supports extensive stakeholder consultation, serving to strengthen knowledge sharing, improve coordination, and address fragmented efforts. The technical working groups also contribute to the development of national assistive technology road maps, strategies and action plans – and the review of policies and regulatory frameworks.

National coordination platforms have been formed or strengthened, as part of ATscale-supported programmes, in many countries including **Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.**

In Azerbaijan, representatives from state regulatory authorities evaluate product quality and specifications during a subregional technical capacity building workshop on assistive products.

© WHO Azerbaijan

Senegal

Eight regional multisectoral committees on disability and assistive technology were established (out of 14 regions) with support from WHO and the National Orthopaedic Equipment Centre (CNAO). These regional bodies promote coordination around assistive technology across the sectors concerned – including health, education, employment, transport and social protection – while integrating the voice of organizations representing assistive technology user.

Another common feature across programmes is the development of national priority assistive product lists (APLs), based on the WHO model APL. These lists support programme implementation and provide a foundation for decision-making on product provision, including government budget allocation, pooled procurement, local production and the reduction of tariffs and taxes on assistive products. ATscale monitors the adoption and endorsement of these lists across the countries it supports.

Cambodia

CHAI successfully supported the development and official adoption of the country's APL by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; as well as the Physical Rehabilitation Centre Outreach Service Guideline for nationwide implementation.

Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Nepal, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe have developed and strengthened their respective APL with support from the ATscale foundational programmes.

Zambia

Increased governance and collaboration among partners resulted in the development of an APL ratified by the government of Zambia, informed by the national rapid assessment of assistive technology (rATA) study, revealing an over 90 per cent unmet assistive technology need.

Increased financial coverage and funding for assistive technology

Lack of financing for assistive technology is one of the key barriers to accessing assistive products and services. These are usually costly, while users are often economically marginalized. In addition, costs are not one-off, they recur throughout an individual's lifetime.

ATscale supports the adoption of policies and mechanisms to improve affordable access to assistive products and services for all those in need. Additionally, ATscale supports government partners in making informed decisions on financing assistive technology, to ensure efficient use of

resources and to realize equitable coverage nationally. This can include strategies such as prioritization and safeguarding assistive technology in national budgets and insurance structures, health taxes on harmful consumption invested into assistive technology, pooled procurement, public-private partnerships and innovative payment methods.

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan

Significant strides were made towards strengthening access to assistive technology across all three countries. This was undertaken through targeted policies and strategies and dedicated steering committees, with technical support from the WHO Regional Office for Europe. In Azerbaijan, the Government covers initial costs of wheelchairs, eyeglasses and hearing aids for registered persons with disabilities. Advocacy is underway to extend assistive technology budgeting beyond those with disability certification to include older persons and other individuals with functional limitations. In Georgia, the Government has increased funding to fully cover the cost of hearing aids, and paediatric and electric wheelchairs, with only a small co-payment for select adult groups for manual wheelchairs. Primary healthcare providers now receive a 20 GEL (~US$12) payment for each assistive technology user served – incentivizing quality care.

Each country has increased its assistive technology budget:

Senegal

In 2025, the Government demonstrated a strong commitment to assistive technology by allocating a four-year budget of CFA 2.4 billion (~US$4.3 million) to the General Directorate of Social Action. In addition, annual funding allocated by the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene for the National Orthopaedic Equipment Centre (CNAO) increased significantly to reach CFA 850 million (~US$1.5 million) – expanding access to orthopaedic care nationwide.

The ATscale-supported programme in Senegal is expanding access to products and services. Teams from the National Orthopaedic Equipment Centre and WHO, under the Ministry of Health, are pictured receiving prosthetic and orthotic components and materials.

© CNAO

Tajikistan: Bringing assistive technology closer to home

A technician fabricates mobility products at the National Orthopaedic Centre in Tajikistan. Strengthening local manufacturing capacity is central to the country's decentralized 'one-stop-shop' model, which aims to make assistive technology services available at the primary health-care level — closer to where people live.

© WHO Tajikistan

Tajikistan is pioneering a decentralized 'one-stop-shop' systems approach, bringing assistive technology services out of specialized urban centres and into local communities. A range of quality assistive products has been made accessible to the general population at no cost, not just to registered persons with disabilities. Moreover, for the first time, assistive products are complemented by services including assessment, fitting, user training and follow-up, all available at the same location within primary health-care centres.

In 2025, the programme reached 2,187 individuals, providing a wide range of assistive products from wheelchairs to clubfoot braces. These products were not simply delivered, they were fitted by trained rehabilitation personnel to ensure a clinical standard of care at the primary health level.

A distinguishing feature of the programme is its emphasis on financial sustainability. A high-level strategic dialogue on assistive technology financing was launched in 2025 to move beyond donor dependency. By demonstrating the economic and social return on investment, the programme is successfully advocating for assistive technology to be a permanent line item in the national health budget.

In 2025, the programme reached 2,187 individuals, providing a wide range of assistive products from wheelchairs to clubfoot braces.

Tajikistan's model proves that even in resource-constrained environments, assistive technology can be scaled by empowering the existing primary health workforce.

The 'one-stop shop' model reached Nozimoh Hoshimjon, a 43-year-old shoemaker. A new wheelchair suited for rough terrain allows him to make the 1.2km journey from his home to his workshop safely and independently.

For Halimova Sabrinisso, a dressmaker, her new wheelchair ended years of being carried on the backs of relatives. She now attends weddings and community events, and uses the chair at her sewing machine to expand her small business with new orders.

Strengthened workforce capacity

Lack of trained workforce is a large factor affecting access to assistive technology. Training can be costly and time-consuming, and in many cases, accredited courses are not available locally, making it very difficult to address workforce shortages in the near term. To address this gap, training and capacity building of the assistive technology workforce remains central to ATscale's country programme investments.

Personnel are supported in upskilling for assistive technology within their current roles in health and social care. For example, community healthcare workers and teachers are trained in vision and hearing screening to facilitate screening of school-aged children as part of their roles. Efforts are also underway to integrate new curricula into professional training and continuing professional development programmes for the workforce.

Funding and scholarships are provided to train a country's healthcare workers at existing institutions, both within the country and overseas. This is further strengthened by introducing a mandatory period of public service for those receiving scholarships, advocating for the creation of new positions for recent graduates and returning nationals, and an equitable distribution of positions in rural and urban communities.

Kenya

Through technical support from CHAI, Kenya has expanded its assistive technology trained workforce, with 2,273 (48 per cent female) health personnel trained in various domains including audiology, ophthalmology, speech and language therapy. Additionally, 237 (54 per cent female) people have been trained on the WHO Basic and Intermediate Wheelchair Service Package to ensure appropriate assessment and fitting. This technical capacity building is further supported by a robust scholarship programme that has enrolled 95 students across disciplines, with the first 21 graduates already contributing to county-level service delivery.

In Kenya, rehabilitation professionals trained in the WHO Wheelchair Service Package ensure that users receive high-quality, well-fitted mobility solutions for users.

© CHAI Kenya

Rwanda

The national Audiology and Speech Therapy Training Curriculum was strengthened through the integration of ear and hearing care components. Additionally, the Audiology Technician Curriculum was updated to include Rwandan Sign Language and a new Fundamentals of Audiology Practice module. In addition, training manuals and educational materials were distributed to caregivers, community health workers and teachers. These support early detection, follow-up of children with hearing aids, and maintenance of assistive products. In 2025, 297 community health workers were trained on this new technical framework.

As part of the work to scale up access to assistive products in health and social protection systems, the first white cane orientation training was successfully conducted in Rasht District, Tajikistan.

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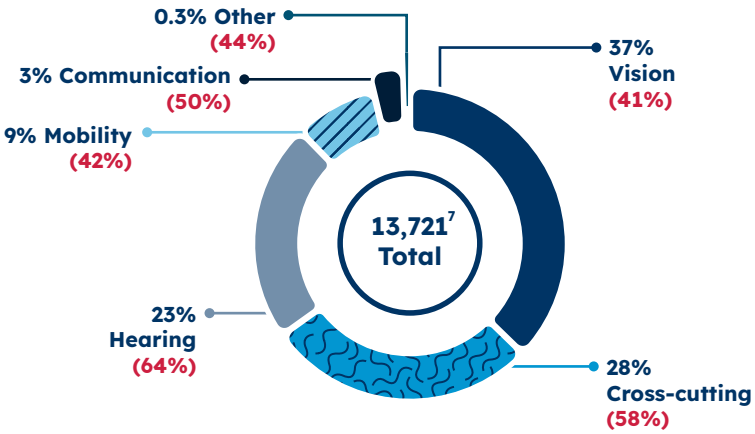
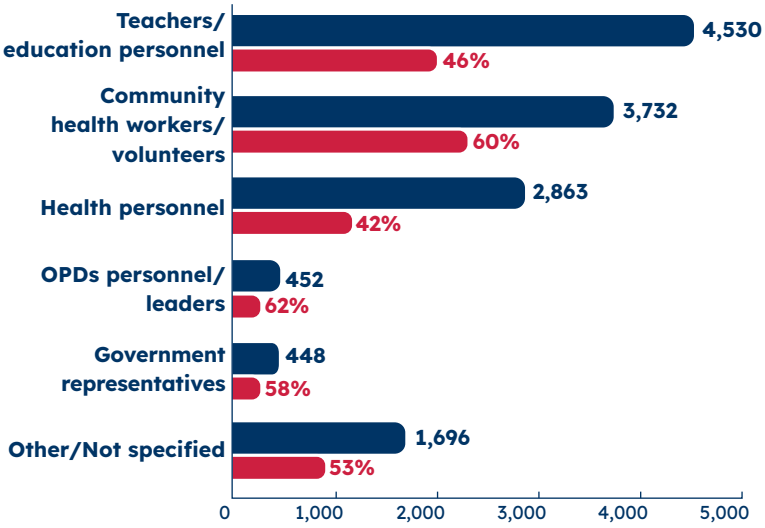
People trained by functional domains

% female



People trained by personnel title

% female



[7] The sum of people trained across each functional domains controls for potential double counting of individuals who might have received training on several functional domains.

Strengthened national data systems

Many low- and middle-income countries face challenges in collecting health-related data due to the limited capacity of national information systems. ATscale supports the integration of assistive technology and disability-related indicators into existing national frameworks, such as the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) – a widely used health data platform – and the Health Management Information System (HMIS), to help governments identify needs and inform decisions on the scale and location of services. This data collection is essential not only for monitoring ATscale programme progress but for understanding the effectiveness of the entire national assistive technology system.

To ensure evidence-based programme design, ATscale leverages validated, standardized WHO-designed tools such as the rapid Assistive Technology Assessment (rATA), the Systematic Assessment of Rehabilitation Situation (STARS), and the Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment (ATA-C). These comprehensive assessments have already been conducted in several ATscale-supported countries, including Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Nepal, Peru and the United Republic of Tanzania. By encouraging the use of these assessment tools, ATscale supports countries to gather the vital evidence they need to address capacity gaps and meet the specific needs of users.

To enhance local mobility solutions, a technician in Senegal creates custom orthopaedic shoe insoles, which are carefully fabricated by hand at the National Orthopaedic Equipment Centre.

© CNAO

Kenya

To track national service delivery, the programme launched the National Assistive Technology Dashboard, a web-based platform which integrates partner mapping, facility-level data and real-time data from the Kenya Health Information System. Additionally, assistive products were integrated into the Government-managed Logistics Management Information System, creating a reliable pipeline for efficient procurement, distribution and last-mile delivery of assistive technology.

Senegal

With the support of WHO, 53 indicators related to rehabilitation and assistive technology have been approved for integration into the District Health Information Software (DHIS2) platform by the Ministry of Health's Directorate of Planning, Research and Statistics and national stakeholders. Following a comprehensive revision of management tools for technicians at all levels of the health system, partners are now focused on capacity-building through training sessions to ensure effective data collection and nationwide monitoring.

Integration of assistive technology into humanitarian settings

ATscale continues to develop complementary approaches to improve the integration of assistive technology in humanitarian settings, a critical yet often overlooked component of humanitarian action.

Since the beginning of 2025, ATscale has worked in partnership with Momentum Wheels for Humanity and their programme CLASP – Consolidating Logistics for Assistive Technology Supply and Provision – to pre-position a significant number of essential and life-saving assistive products for emergency humanitarian responses. This has been achieved in collaboration with and at the request of organizations on the ground, ensuring vital assistive products are available within days following a disaster or sudden-onset conflict.

The programme was developed with global experts to form part of humanitarian emergency and recovery responses for people affected by crises – including displaced persons and refugees. Through this collaboration, an assistive technology kit (AT Kit) was defined to complement other existing health kits, such as the Trauma Kit developed by WHO. The AT Kit addresses, at the community level, the needs of both newly injured people discharged from hospitals and those with pre-existing health conditions. A decision tree for the release of the assistive technology kits was also developed.

Myanmar

Following the March 2025 earthquake in Myanmar, UNICEF and its partners, supported by ATscale, deployed four AT Kits containing over 2,000 assistive products to benefit thousands of adults and children displaced by the earthquake.

To promote the life-saving potential of assistive technology in humanitarian settings, ATscale and HI produced a well-received **campaign film**, **AT Saves Lives**. The film was launched on World Humanitarian Day and calls on international donors and governments to significantly increase funding and to integrate assistive technology into all phases of humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery.

ATscale's proactive approach highlights the importance of integrating assistive technology into humanitarian response. While often overlooked, this is crucial in order to support the recovery of all individuals affected by emergencies, and ensure they have access to essential humanitarian services.

Hope on wheels: Rebuilding a life after Myanmar's earthquake

When the 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on 28 March 2025, Aung Moe, a 24-year-old shop assistant in Mandalay, did not think of his own safety. He ran towards a collapsing mosque to help those trapped inside. Falling debris struck his back, causing a severe spinal injury. His younger sister died in the same incident.

> **"I was grieving the loss of my sister and couldn't move around my village or be part of my community like I used to be."**

The young man now found himself unable to move independently, isolated from the community he had risked his life to protect. "I was confined to my home for months," Aung Moe says.

UNICEF and its partners successfully utilized ATscale's pre-positioned AT Kits to quickly access and deploy the essential items such as wheelchairs, crutches and walkers to affected populations in Myanmar.

This included Aung Moe, who received a wheelchair – marking the beginning of his journey back to independence. "This wheelchair has given me back my freedom," he says. "I can move around my village again, visit my neighbours and feel like I'm part of the community once more."

Aung Moe is one of more than 2,000 people who have received assistive products following the earthquake. Today, he looks to the future with quiet determination: "One day, I want to become a community volunteer to help others like me rebuild their lives."

Aung Moe, 24, in his village in Myanmar, with a UNICEF colleague. After a spinal injury sustained during the March 2025 earthquake, Aung Moe received an appropriate wheelchair through UNICEF as part of ATscale's pre-positioned AT Kits initiative — restoring his mobility and reconnecting him with his community.

© UNICEF Myanmar/2025/ Nyan Zay Htet

Lessons from the ground

What foundational country support has taught us

From 2023 to 2024, ATscale invested in foundational programmes in 12 countries to strengthen policy, systems and service delivery for assistive technology – with an initial duration of 12 months. These programmes generated evidence, mobilized political will and built capacity as key steps before broader scale-up support. In 2025, important lessons were drawn to shape how ATscale will further strengthen delivery of its work.

- **Engage early**. Early and meaningful engagement of governments, civil society and OPDs from the design phase is key to strengthening ownership, aligning programmes with national priorities, and ensuring sustainability beyond the funding period, while also reinforcing accountability and inclusive decision-making.
- **Commit for the longer term**. Longer programme durations and stronger government commitments create systemic change.

NGO representatives conduct fieldwork for the Country Capacity Assessment for Assistive Technology in Indonesia. Evidence gathered through assessments like these helped shape ATscale's foundational country programmes and the lessons now informing its approach to scale-up support.

© Angus Stewart

Lessons from the ground

Short timelines limit policy endorsement and implementation, suggesting that future foundational support should extend to around 24 months and secure early government buy-in to navigate delays and ensure effective uptake of strategies and roadmaps.

- **Prioritize catalytic funding**. Investments should prioritize continued, catalytic funding for early-stage assistive technology systems, as this foundational support was shown to generate political will, improve coordination and advance national planning. These investments are particularly impactful in countries in the early stages, supporting them to lay the ground for long-term, system-wide scale-up and sustainable change.
- **Include a pathway for scaling up**. Investments should include a clear pathway from foundational support to scale-up, with minimal funding gaps, and opportunities for co-financing. Maintaining momentum between phases is critical, as delays or lack of follow-on funding risk losing political commitment and slowing progress, particularly in countries that have already built initial capacity and demand.

A technician manufactures an orthosis at the Centro del Aparato Locomotor in El Salvador. Investing in local workforce capacity is essential to building assistive technology systems that can be sustained and scaled beyond the initial funding period.

© ATscale

Regional launch

Launch of Pacific Island countries programme

In 2025, under its **Unlock Healthy Learning initiative**, ATscale launched the **Strengthening Pacific Assistive Technology and Rehabilitation for Kids** (SPARK) programme backed by a US$10.5 million investment from the Government of Australia through DFAT. The programme aims to expand access to assistive technology and rehabilitation services for school-aged children across seven Pacific Island countries: the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Dr Karen Reyes of ATscale introduces the SPARK programme in the Federated States of Micronesia, one of seven Pacific Island countries where the initiative aims to expand access to assistive technology and rehabilitation services for school-aged children.

SPARK is implemented through a joint effort between the FHF-WHO Consortium and UNICEF, using a one-programme approach to coordinate work across the participating countries. These partners were selected in collaboration with the respective government through a competitive process undertaken in 2025. The initiative focuses on school-aged children who may have vision, hearing or mobility impairments, with the aim of translating improved access to care into greater participation and inclusion in school environments. Service delivery activities include integrated vision and hearing screening, referral pathways, comprehensive assessment and care, provision of assistive products, and follow-up services such as maintenance and repair.

These efforts are complemented by capacity development of teachers and frontline personnel to support early identification and inclusive learning environments. Alongside service delivery, SPARK includes efforts to strengthen assistive product supply chains, procurement, advocacy and national governance; and to increase financing for assistive technology research and regional coordination.

The programme follows a three-year approach, beginning with planning and capacity building, embedding services within national systems and budgets, and finally scaling up service delivery systems.

Pillar 2:

Strengthening global enablers

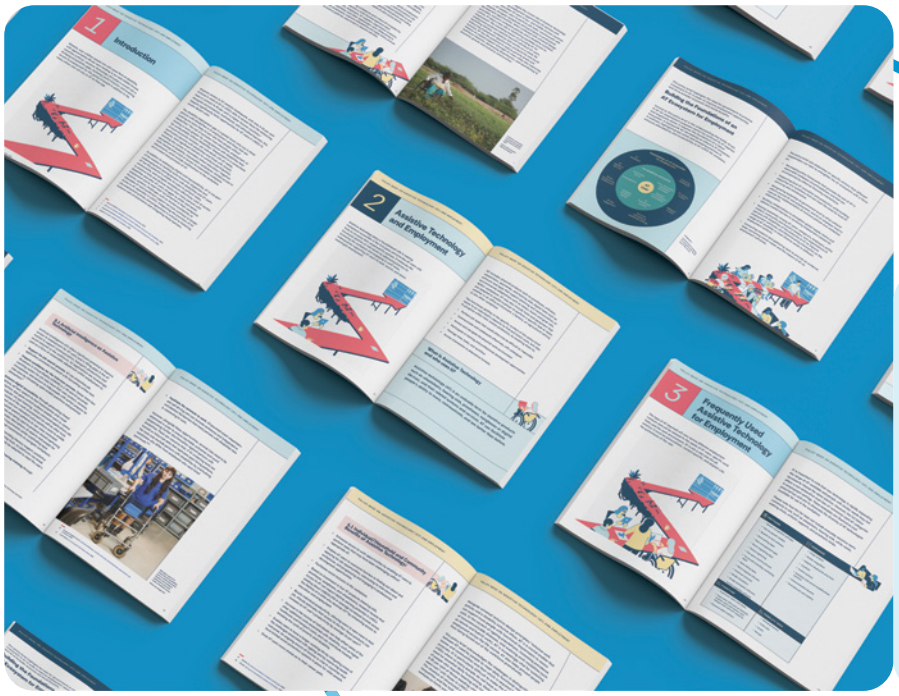
Tools, resources and evidence driving systemic change

Wearing glasses has improved the life of Leakna, a student from Choam Khsan District in Cambodia who received prescription glasses and ongoing eye care.

No single country can solve the systemic barriers that limit access to assistive technology on its own. Fragmented markets, a shortage of trained professionals, weak evidence bases and limited financing models are challenges that require coordinated global responses. Through its work to strengthen global enablers, ATscale develops and promotes the shared tools, standards, guidance and evidence that countries need to build and sustain effective assistive technology systems. These tools and resources are freely available to all stakeholders – governments, donors, private sector, civil society – providing guidance on how to lower costs, improve quality, build enabling environments and shift from ad hoc provision towards integrated, nationally led systems that can reach everyone who needs assistive technology.

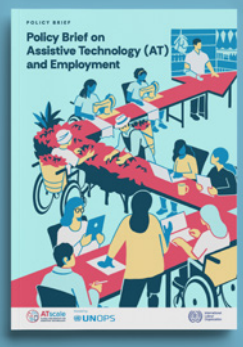
Evidence for action: building the case for cross-sectoral change

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires assistive technology to be recognized not as a niche concern but as a fundamental requirement for global development. In 2025, ATscale published a series of policy briefs in close partnership with leading United Nations agencies. These set out the cross-cutting relevance of assistive technology to employment, gender equality, education, disaster risk reduction and climate action. This work has also strengthened collaboration with these agencies and reinforced the relevance of assistive technology within their respective mandates.



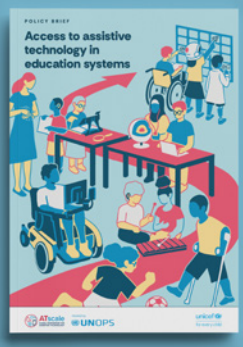
ATscale's series of policy briefs, developed in partnership with leading United Nations agencies, set out the cross-cutting relevance of assistive technology to employment, gender equality, education, disaster risk reduction and climate action.

Key insights from the 2025 policy briefs



Assistive technology and employment

Assistive technology is not a workplace luxury, it is a productivity engine. Providing just four basic assistive products can increase a user's productivity by an average of 16 per cent and yields a 9:1 return on investment by enabling individuals to enter both the formal and informal workforces. When combined with universal design principles, inclusive workplace policies and a disability-confident culture, assistive technology plays a key role in facilitating equitable access to employment.



Assistive technology in education systems

Access to assistive technology is a prerequisite for inclusive education. Learners with disabilities are 49 per cent more likely to have never attended school, while those that do often achieve lower literacy rates and experience higher dropout rates. Assistive technology can remove most of the physical and communication barriers that prevent these children from participating, achieving foundational literacy, and completing their schooling.

Assistive technology for inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate action

In climate-driven disasters and conflicts, the mortality rate for persons with disabilities can reach four times higher than for the general population. Assistive technology is a life-saving tool for survival, evacuation and resilience, yet only 20 per cent of countries currently include assistive products in their preparedness and response systems.

Assistive technology and gender equality

Assistive technology is a critical enabler of gender equality. It can empower women and girls to exercise bodily autonomy and reduces the disproportionate unpaid care burden often borne by female family members, freeing their time for education, paid employment and social participation.

Priority action areas: addressing key barriers to access assistive technology

Work carried out through Pillar 2 is organized in four priority areas that seek to enable a sustainable assistive technology ecosystem:

1. **Building sustainable assistive product markets**
2. **Bringing services to everyone, everywhere**
3. **Removing financial barriers to access assistive technology**
4. **Leveraging the power of digital assistive technology**

1. Building sustainable assistive product markets

ATscale is working to make transparent, reliable and up-to-date market data available to buyers and suppliers, while pursuing interventions that increase access to quality products, reduce costs and bring products closer to users. This includes advancing global pooled procurement mechanisms, optimizing tax and tariff regimes, strengthening national procurement approaches, and investing in regional hubs and local production. Together, these actions build stronger, healthier and more sustainable assistive technology markets.

Strategic lever

Fixing global market failures, such as lack of market information or transparency, high prices and limited supply, takes more than the actions of a single country alone,especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Multiplier effect

By providing transparent data, market-entry guidance and tools, as well as investments at regional and local levels, ATscale empowers national buyers to negotiate better deals and encourage manufacturers to enter previously risky markets.

Desired outcome

A step-change in assistive product markets is attracting growing numbers of buyers and suppliers of affordable and high-quality products situated closer to users.

In 2025, ATscale made transparent, reliable and up-to-date market data available by continuing a series of **assistive products market reports**, provided a roadmap for entering these markets, and worked towards supporting regional hubs that bring products closer to users:

The **Assistive products market reports** address a key driver of market failure – information asymmetry – a lack of transparent, comparable information available to all market participants. Produced by ATscale in collaboration with CHAI, the 2025 report covers 25 global organizations, more than 170 suppliers and 200 products. Together, the 2024 and 2025 reports enable governments and partners to make more informed, cost-effective procurement decisions, as well as to estimate the size of the unmet demand and analyse the cost of drivers. A global webinar promoting the 2025 reports' findings was held in September and reached 1,800 stakeholders around the world. The findings were also leveraged for policy discussions at the national level, such as at the 3rd Annual Rehabilitation Summit in the United Republic of Tanzania; and to foster greater international dialogue and south-south collaboration between buyers and suppliers, such as at the Care and Rehabilitation Expo in Beijing.

To make the information even more easily accessible and keep it up-to-date, work is ongoing to launch an online platform.

The **Guidance for market entry in the assistive technology sector report** provides a structured, step-by-step tool for manufacturers, importers and distributors – local, regional or global – aiming to enter African assistive technology markets, with a specific focus on Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. This report examines barriers and how fragmented regulations, inconsistent quality standards, and unclear taxation complicate market entry.

The **strengthening of regional distribution hubs** is being supported by ATscale to translate evidence and policy into practical action on the ground. These initiatives support greater diversification, localization and increased sustainability of regional assistive technology distribution networks. In **Cambodia**, this is focused on transforming the Orthopaedic Component Factory into a regional centre of excellence by improving production efficiency, management capabilities, and compliance with international quality standards. In **Togo**, ATscale collaborated strategically with the OADCPH (African Organization for the Development of Centers for People with Disabilities) to expand a regional hub serving West Africa. The hub is operated by technical experts and also includes an online shop that allows transparent pricing and procurement of good quality assistive products.

2. Bringing services to everyone, everywhere

As countries invest in strengthening their assistive technology policies, systems and services, access to the latest evidence and guidance on effective service delivery models is critical. ATscale is working with partners to fill gaps in guidance across the life cycle and accelerate the adoption of innovative approaches – from novel prostheses fitting technologies to handheld autorefractors for eyeglasses prescriptions – which simplify service delivery, reduce workforce requirements and bring assistive technology closer to those who need it.

Strategic lever

Moving beyond ad-hoc product provision to standardized, high-quality clinical care models that can be delivered in any setting.

Multiplier effect

Global handbooks, training packages and toolkits allow countries to decentralize assistive technology services from specialized facilities to primary care and community levels, while maintaining consistent standards of quality. This ensures services are available closer to where people live, learn and work.

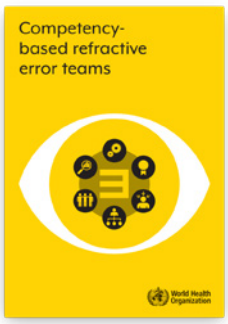
Desired outcome

Comprehensive guidance and tools, including on innovative service delivery models, are easily available and supporting countries to design services for assistive technology access across the life cycle for all those who can benefit.

In 2025, ATscale supported the simplification of service delivery through evidence generation for the use of new tools (autorefractors), the integration of services (vision and hearing screening - which is already being used), task sharing for more efficient use of human resources (competency-based refractive error teams) and ensuring that existing resources are easy to find, access and use (ATconnect):

The **Study on handheld autorefractor technologies** – and accompanying country guidance – evaluates handheld autorefractors as scalable tools to address uncorrected refractive errors affecting millions globally. Conducted in Ethiopia, Nepal and Nigeria, it compares these devices with traditional 'gold standard' refraction methods, assessing accuracy and prescription alignment. The research also explores their feasibility for public health use, particularly in low-resource and remote settings for on-the-spot provision of eyeglasses. It provides evidence on innovative, accessible vision screening solutions that can expand effective refractive error coverage, reduce disparities, and support both community-based and telemedicine-driven service delivery.

The **Vision and hearing screening for school-age children: implementation handbook** was launched at the 2025 World Health Assembly. It provides guidance for integrated vision and hearing screening for school-aged children, and covers targets, evidence-based screening tests, referral criteria, human resource requirements and various service-delivery approaches. It is being operationalized through the Unlock Healthy Learning programme across seven Pacific Island countries, enabling harmonized screening approaches, strengthened referral pathways, and expanded access to timely care for school-aged children.



The **Competency-based refractive error teams (CRET) toolkit** was launched at the 2025 World Health Assembly by WHO. CRET offers a structured approach to workforce planning by clearly defining roles and responsibilities, standardizing training requirements, and facilitating better coordination between occupational groups and across public and private sectors. The tool helps optimize the use of available human resources by supporting task-reallocation and collaborative practice, particularly in settings with limited resource availability.

ATscale's technical report and country guidance on handheld autorefractors provides evidence on accessible, scalable tools for vision screening — supporting efforts to address uncorrected refractive errors affecting millions globally.

© ATscale

ATconnect
UNLOCKING A WORLD OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

ATconnect: connecting the global assistive technology ecosystem

For years, assistive technology information has been fragmented, making it difficult for stakeholders to access the full range of available resources and worldwide programme information. To address this, ATscale developed an online platform, **ATconnect** – launched by the UK Government at the 2025 World Summit on Social Development.

ATconnect serves as a single, searchable gateway to trusted tools, standards and programme data, helping to connect the global assistive technology ecosystem and strengthen collaboration among practitioners. The platform gained early traction, with more than 2,600 users in its first month. It has also received positive feedback from partners, many of whom have expressed interest in featuring their work on the platform.

Key features include:

Resource library

More than 450 quality vetted guidelines, toolkits and training materials.

Interactive global map

Visualizing more than 400 assistive technology programmes in more than 100 countries to foster collaboration and reduce duplication.

Community-driven approach

A living platform where partners contribute their own evidence and local insights.

> **“My experience with ATconnect was great! As an assistive technology user and consultant, I value how it connects the global assistive technology community and provides authentic resources about programmes worldwide.”**
>
> **Yusra, assistive technology user.**

Visit ATconnect.info to explore the map and access the full repository of ATscale freely accessible knowledge products.

3. Removing financial barriers to access assistive technology

Enhanced and predictable financing is foundational for accelerating assistive technology access. Despite this, in many countries the large majority of spending remains out-of-pocket and neglected in national budgets. ATscale is strengthening the evidence base on domestic financing strategies, while engaging with national policymakers to develop and implement tailored financing solutions. This includes integrating assistive technology into national health insurance and basic benefits packages to expand inclusion, equity and affordability.

Strategic lever

Shifting the perception of assistive technology from a 'charity cost' to a high-return socio-economic investment led by national government commitments.

Multiplier effect

By providing policymakers with robust policy recommendations and country-tailored tools and solutions, ATscale helps countries integrate assistive technology into national policies and long-term national budgets.

Desired outcome

Evidence on sustainable assistive technology financing options, approaches and tools are available for countries to adopt and roll out.

In 2025, ATscale supported governments to strengthen financing for assistive technology – informing policy and budget decisions, advancing sustainable financing approaches and helping to translate these into increased national allocations, expanded coverage and improved incentives for service delivery, as demonstrated by country results highlighted above. In parallel, as part of ATscale's work to produce an expanded range of freely available knowledge products, a policy brief is in development on domestic financing strategies as well as a methodology to support the development of national investment cases. This will be released in 2026 to further guide country action.

A student reads using Braille at an inclusive school in Senegal. Assistive products and adaptive tools in the classroom are essential to ensuring that children who need them can participate fully in education.

© UNICEFSenegal/2025/Tremeau

4. Leveraging the power of digital assistive technology

The rapid growth in smartphone use and other digital technologies offers a significant opportunity to improve accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities and others in low- and middle-income countries. This potential remains under-exploited, though, due to gaps in supportive policy environments, fragmented standards and limited adaptation to local languages and needs. ATscale is working to harness this opportunity by supporting countries to recognize smartphones as digital assistive technology, advancing common standards for developers, and exploring how artificial intelligence can make assistive products more affordable, personalized and accessible.

Strategic lever

Utilizing rapid digital advancement to leapfrog traditional, slower models of provision.

Multiplier effect

Proving that mainstream technology, like smartphones, can serve as a primary assistive tool, significantly reducing the per-person cost of inclusion.

Desired outcome

The potential of digital advances for assistive technology, particularly smartphones, is being harnessed more effectively.

ATscale has supported global research highlighting the role of smartphones as powerful tools for inclusion and their integration into assistive technology programmes. Conducted in partnership with GDI Hub and Google, the study shows how **mobile devices can foster independence, learning, communication and inclusion** – demonstrating that smartphones are an effective form of assistive technology.

Key findings include:

- **Smartphones increase independence.** Participants report improved communication, navigation and access to online opportunities.
- **Training transforms usage.** Many accessibility features remain underutilized until proper training unlocks their full potential.
- **Mobile as a bridge to assistive technology.** Smartphones can reduce the need for expensive, standalone devices, making assistive technology more accessible, especially in resource-constrained settings.
- **New evidence base.** Data and recommendations generated by this study will guide governments, manufacturers and service providers in making mobile technology truly inclusive.

Pillar 3:

Advocating for change

Catalysing political will, building on momentum: advancing access to assistive technology through advocacy and knowledge sharing

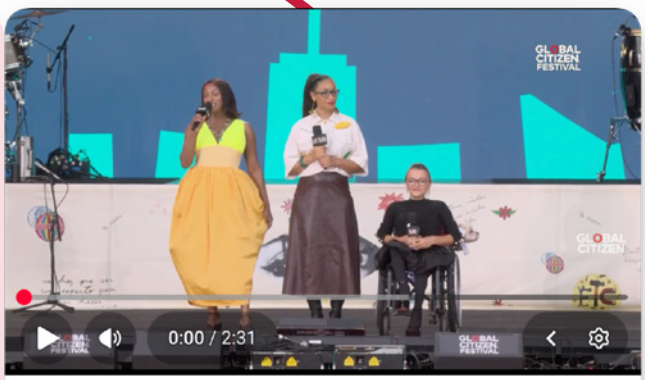
Leaders and advocates unite at the World Health Summit 2025 to call for stronger disability inclusion across global health systems.

In 2025, ATscale's role as a convenor of stakeholders, a curator of knowledge and a catalyst for political will delivered measurable results. By bringing together governments, OPDs, the private sector and development partners around a shared agenda, ATscale amplified the visibility of assistive technology, built consensus on priority actions and mobilized new resources – advancing the global goal of ensuring an additional 500 million people can get the assistive technology they need.

Global awareness-raising action across all sectors

Growing momentum is driving awareness and action. ATscale is supporting diverse stakeholders – from grassroots communities to international partners – to come together to champion inclusion, amplify lived experiences, and advance solutions that increase access to assistive technology.

ATscale Goodwill Ambassador – Leopoldine Huyghues Despointes. A champion for disability inclusion and the transformative power of assistive technology, noted producer, actress and advocate Leopoldine Huyghues Despointes, was officially named ATscale's first Goodwill Ambassador. Her role was formalized at a high-level event held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September in New York, culminating in her prominent participation at the **Global Citizen Festival**.



Building Pathways in Education | Global Citizen Festival NYC 2025

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Global Citizen Prize winner and Creative Director, Ghana Food Movement, Lydia Kekeli Amenyaglo, joins ATscale Goodwill Ambassador, UNOPS, Leopoldine Huyghues Despointes, and ...more

World Day for Assistive Technology: A world united in celebration and global action

The second annual celebration by partners around the globe of **World Day for Assistive Technology** was held on 4 June as part of the Unlock The Everyday campaign. From conferences across Africa to grassroots radio campaigns in Asia, as well as massive global digital engagement, the day's activities underscored the importance of making life-changing assistive technology accessible to all. A few examples are listed below:

Togo

The African Organization for the Development of Centres for People with Disabilities ran a week-long awareness-raising campaign and organized a mission to a rural community hospital.

Nigeria

The National Eye, Ear, and Sensory Functions Programme ran public forums urging more-inclusive health systems.

United Republic of Tanzania

The Kyaro Assistive Tech team organized community events to showcase assistive technology solutions and stories from users.

Senegal, Georgia and **Tajikistan**

WHO country offices facilitated health forums and other public events.

Kenya

The Inclusive Africa Conference, hosted in Nairobi, drew international attention, with nine media articles covering assistive technology innovations and policy discussions.

Cambodia

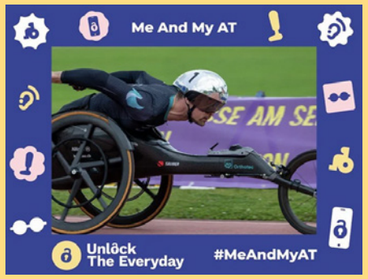
HI and CHAI hosted six community-level events raising awareness of assistive technology and local services.

Campaign partner events

CBM Australia, Global Disability Innovation Hub, Motivation International, Shonaquip, A Leg To Stand On, and others amplified impact with events and storytelling.

Unlock The Everyday

A centrepiece of World Day for Assistive Technology was the **MeAndMyAT Challenge**, an invitation to assistive technology users to provide photos and videos showing how their assistive product helps them participate in everyday life. More than 200 people took part.



Swiss Paralympian Marcel Hug, known as The Silver Bullet, told his thousands of followers, "Assistive technology is my everyday freedom. It's how I train, compete and live fully."

"I'm grateful for my wheelchair. It is more than a mobility aid…it's my key to independence and everyday life. It doesn't just support movement…it supports dreams, goals and living fully." **Mumsie Odirile, actress and disability advocate.**

Small grants encourage grassroots participation

The Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) – in collaboration with ten OPDs in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe – led a three-month regional campaign. The initiative strengthened visibility, mobilized stakeholders and ensured the active and meaningful participation of people with lived experience in shaping advocacy efforts. By centring lived experience and fostering coordinated action, the campaign advanced the case for greater investment, awareness and access to high-quality, affordable assistive technology.

© FEDOMA

World Day for Assistive Technology content was shared in 11 languages and reached more than 42 million people – an 18-fold increase in engagement since the 2024 edition – demonstrating that when countries, communities and individuals rally together, the impact is significant. The blend of high-level conferences, grassroots events and user-led digital campaigns created both immediate awareness and lasting momentum.

Strategic partnerships and high-level engagement

ATscale actively brought together and engaged with partners across sectors – including governments, international organizations and the private sector – at a series of international and national forums to share knowledge and to assist in advancing the assistive technology agenda. The Partnership continues to champion users of assistive technology from low- and middle-income countries, and to identify platforms for their voices to be heard.

April, Berlin

Global Disability Summit

ATscale curated an exhibition entitled Transforming Today and creATing Futures showcasing recent innovations. This included 3D printing of assistive technology, speech-to-text and text-to-speech technology, low-cost glasses with vision kits, customizable wheelchairs, and use of virtual reality in training. Federal Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz and King Abdullah II of Jordan attended the event, as well as other high-level dignitaries.

Siddarth Daga, co-founder of NeoMotion, demonstrates mobility innovations at the ATscale-curated exhibition Transforming Today and creATing Futures during the Global Disability Summit 2025 in Berlin.

© ATscale/Sören Koopmann

“This exhibition is testament to our commitment to creating a society where everyone can participate and thrive. We are proud to showcase the incredible potential of assistive technology to transform lives and create a more inclusive world.”

Hans-Peter Baur, Global Disability Summit 2025 Commissioner, and Deputy Director-General German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

June, New York

COSP18: promoting inclusive employment

At the 18th Session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP18) to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ATscale and ILO hosted a side event, co-sponsored by the governments of Australia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, in partnership with IDA, UNOPS, UNICEF and Google, to launch the Policy brief on assistive technology and employment. The event called for urgent action to make inclusive employment a reality.

Panellists discuss the link between assistive technology and inclusive employment at a side event co-hosted by ATscale and ILO during COSP18 in New York. The event launched ATscale's policy brief on assistive technology and employment. © ATscale

June, Nairobi

Sixth Inclusive Africa Conference

ATscale convened an interactive session entitled Affordability, Market Access and Investment in Assistive Technology for all in Africa. It brought together innovators, assistive technology users, policymakers, donors and disability advocates to discuss how Africa can build truly sustainable assistive technology environments. Insights are expected to guide product design, policymaking and market strategies.

October, Berlin

World Health Summit: beyond the gap, a health system for all

Christian Blind Mission, HI, International Disability and Development Consortium, IDA, Sightsavers, Special Olympics, WHO and ATscale co-hosted a session which confronted the realities that health systems exclude one in six people and that, unless the world closes the health gap for persons with disabilities, universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals will remain out of reach.

> **"A wheelchair brings a person to care, hearing aids make the consultation meaningful, and communication devices bring a voice to care. Yet, nine out of ten people in low-income countries lack access – that's not a technical failure, it's an equity failure."**
>
> Dr. Karen Reyes, ATscale Senior Programme Manager.

November, Doha

World Summit on Social Development

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) served as an important influencing opportunity to position assistive technology as a core pillar of social development and poverty reduction. ATscale and UNICEF co-hosted a side event during which Australia announced their support to ATscale, and the policy brief Access to assistive technology in education systems was launched. At a second side event, ATscale and UNDRR launched the policy brief Leveraging assistive technology for inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate action. ATscale also joined a panel discussion on inclusive employment organized by the UK, and participated in the African Union-led session, No Social Development Without Inclusion.

Centring lived experience: Strengthening leadership of assistive technology users and partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities

In 2025, ATscale further strengthened its rights-based model of meaningful participation, ensuring that assistive technology users are not merely recipients but architects of the global assistive technology ecosystem. To embed lived experience into core decision-making, a core group of assistive technology users provided inputs on seven major technical requests. This helped to ensure that key initiatives, such as ATconnect, reflect real-world needs and accessibility considerations.

ATscale also expanded support to OPDs through targeted micro-grants in Chad, Georgia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania. These locally led initiatives contributed to tangible policy and systems change. In Togo, advocacy efforts led to the integration of assistive technology financing into 14 municipal policies, while partners in Chad and Pakistan established dedicated assistive technology units and task forces within national organizations.

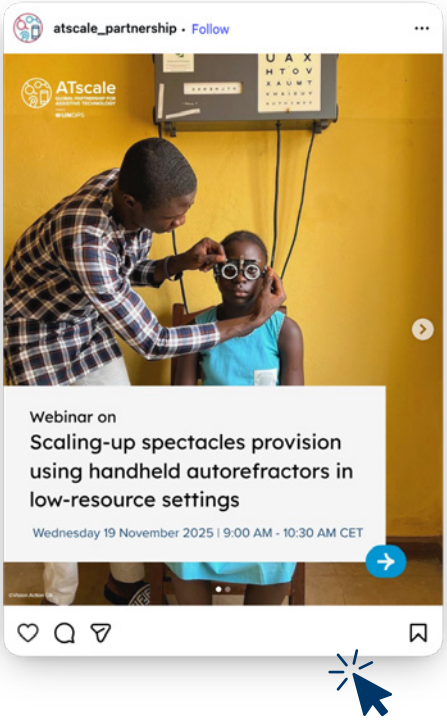
Together, these efforts mark significant progress toward ATscale's strategic goal of allocating five per cent of total funding to OPDs by 2027.

Strengthened communications for collective action

ATscale has strengthened its efforts to better inform, connect and mobilize a broad range of stakeholders. By making its communications clear, accessible and widely available, these initiatives help build consensus around policies and action. ATscale continued its effective use of digital media to maximize visibility, communicate impact and drive engagement.

Curating knowledge and increasing visibility

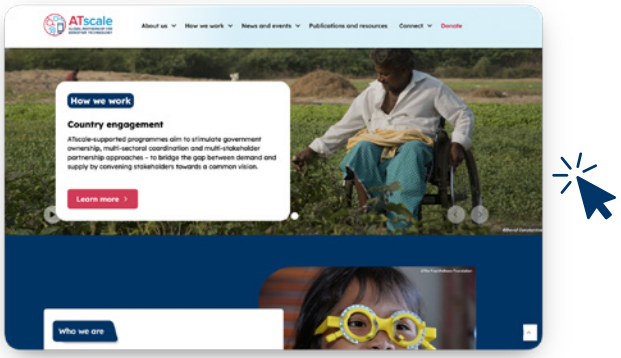
To strategically enhance the visibility and influence of knowledge products, ATscale employs a structured approach, positioning webinars, in-person events, social media, the website and email as key mechanisms for outreach. This is designed not only to share messages and recommendations but also to mobilize stakeholders, foster consensus around critical issues, and accelerate the advancement of knowledge. In 2025, this included the launch of a focused discussion series on market shaping, alongside dedicated webinars disseminating the findings of the policy briefs, and the autorefractor study. The demonstrated reach of these efforts is substantial. Six webinars attracted over 2,000 participants from over 50 countries, underscoring the value of these in disseminating ATscale's core messages and recommendations.



Expanding reach through integrated digital engagement

ATscale continued to grow its digital presence through social media, reaching a combined growth of 33 per cent across its digital channels. These channels play an important role in sharing evidence, highlighting good practices and amplifying the voices and experiences of assistive technology users. The readership of ATscale's electronic newsletter also increased, with open rates exceeding sector benchmarks, indicating strong content engagement.

ATscale launched a new website developed with input from partners, governments and practitioners. It is designed to increase access to country programme updates, knowledge and tools, latest news, events and publications. The increase in unique visitors by 41 per cent to more than 60,000 reflects a growing interest in ATscale's work and the valuable resources it offers.



Together, these communication efforts have contributed to building a more informed and connected global community. By making information accessible, amplifying lived experiences and engaging a wide range of stakeholders, ATscale supports stronger advocacy, better policy alignment and more coordinated action.

Financial and human resources

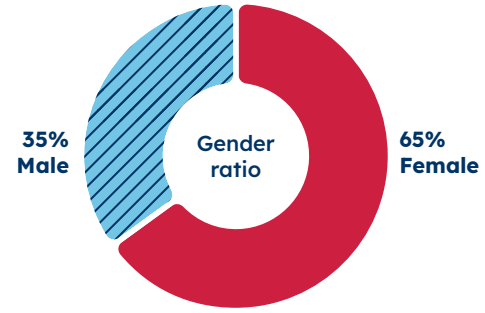
Approved annual budget and expenditures

During 2025, ATscale operated with an actual budget of US$10.9 million. The 2025 commitments and expenditures against the budget were US$10.6 million, with the remaining balance expected to be committed in 2026.[8]

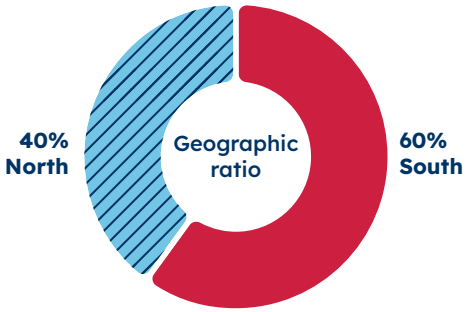
While ATscale is pleased to report significant financial commitments from partner countries, year-end financial results reflect a challenging landscape for the Partnership's own resources. Total commitments and expenditures of US$10.6 million, which were less than originally anticipated, highlight the need to make programmatic adjustments in a context of funding setbacks. This was notably due to the loss of a major donor, USAID, and delays in committed funding from other partners. These constraints directly impacted programme continuity, necessitating adjustments such as reducing the envelope of multi-year country programmes and de-prioritizing new countries, new global enablers investments and investments in national advocacy.

A multicultural and inclusive team

During 2025, ATscale was fully staffed and continued to deliver its mandate through a lean yet effective Secretariat of 18 staff members. ATscale's efforts towards a balanced team have resulted in a multicultural staff representing 13 nationalities, with a south/north ratio of 60/40 and a female/male ratio of 65/35, as well as representation of users of assistive technology within the Secretariat staff.



13 nationalities represented



[8] The official Certified Financial Statement from UNOPS for 2025 had not been finalized at the time of printing so final numbers may differ.

The way forward: building momentum

Building on the progress achieved in 2025, ATscale will intensify its focus on translating strategic ambition and momentum into scaled delivery. However, operational challenges experienced in 2025, particularly regarding delayed funding and programmatic constraints, highlight a serious risk of backsliding if this trend continues.

Plans to scale up delivery include deepening engagement in priority countries, with a focus on system strengthening at all levels, and fostering government ownership and co-financing for sustainable impact.

At the global level, ATscale will prioritize the uptake and application of key tools, guidance and market-shaping efforts developed in collaboration with partners, ensuring that these drive tangible change in countries. Building on the momentum generated in 2025, ATscale will continue to strengthen its global campaigns and advocacy efforts to firmly position assistive technology on the international agenda. This includes raising the voices of users of assistive technology. ATscale will also continue to strengthen the growing global movement championing assistive technology as an enabler for human rights and equitable access to quality healthcare, education and employment, as well as in humanitarian contexts.

To sustain and expand its impact, ATscale will further strengthen resource mobilization and partnerships, including with bilateral donors and the private sector, while continuing to play a catalytic role in mobilizing global commitments.

A health worker conducts a vision assessment in Cambodia. As ATscale moves from strategic ambition to scaled delivery, strengthening service provision at the primary health-care level — and deepening engagement in priority countries — will be central to reaching the people who need assistive technology most.

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atscalepartnership.org

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