

Assistive Products and Inclusive Supplies

unicef 
for every child

Supply Division



Overview

The challenge

Children with disabilities are one of the most marginalized groups in society, facing daily discrimination that bars them from enjoying their rights and participating on an equal basis with the rest of society.

Globally, there's a lack of access to tools and devices that support children with disabilities, such as hearing aids, mobility aids (i.e. wheelchairs or crutches) or cognitive aids that help people with memory, attention or other intellectual challenges. [Today, only 1 in 10 people in need have access to assistive products.](#)

Also referred to as assistive technology, these devices are crucial to help children and young people participate in society and access essential services, education and future employment.

With a limited number of disability-inclusive items in the [UNICEF Supply Catalogue](#), UNICEF is embarking on an urgent mission to bring a disability lens to our products.

The response

UNICEF is working to ensure assistive and inclusive supplies are available and accessible worldwide by introducing new products and increasing advocacy efforts to gain a global consensus for assistive technology.

So far, this has included introducing 24 new products into the Supply Catalogue, among them [eight different types of wheelchairs](#) and [five different hearing aids](#). UNICEF is now able to offer a full range of paediatric wheelchairs and hearing aids to government partners.

Next, UNICEF aims to introduce quality assistive vision products, including glasses, while also continuing to review existing products in the catalogue for inclusiveness.

UNICEF also worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop guidance for assistive technology manufacturers and suppliers, and humanitarian and development staff who procure supplies. This includes a procurement manual with quality measure checks to ensure each item meets the needs of persons with disabilities, and the [Assistive Product Specification 26](#), a guide-book with specs for 26 prioritized assistive products that describes the quality requirements.

UNICEF also organizes high-level workshops under the [AT2030 Programme](#), a global programme supported by UK aid, to bring together representatives from governments and development partners.

The impact

Assistive and inclusive products have a direct impact on the well-being of children with disabilities. Assistive technology supports their inclusion into society, increasing the opportunities for education and employment. For example, a proper use of hearing aids leads young children to improved language skill, while an appropriate wheelchair can increase the chances of participating in school.

UNICEF aims to contribute to 500 million people gaining access to assistive technology by 2030, which is the goal for [ATscale](#), the global partnership for assistive technology. By bringing an inclusive-focus to our supplies, children with disabilities can access tools and devices to help them participate in society and restore their rights as children.

Key figures

Issue

240 million children globally (1 in 10) have a disability.

970 million people worldwide need eyeglasses and low vision aids.

94 million people worldwide need hearing aids.

75 million people worldwide need wheelchairs.

Response

24 new assistive products included in the Supply Catalogue (wheelchairs & hearing aids).

2 new publications on assistive products by UNICEF/WHO.

3 global workshops on assistive products organized by UNICEF.

500 million people to gain access to assistive technology by 2030 through ATscale partnership activities.

9 to 1 return on investment, on funding to assistive technology, with positive ripple effects across society.

Assistive Products and Inclusive Supplies

Key partnerships

To reach the ATscale global goal of 500 million people with assistive technology by 2030, it's essential to leverage the strengths of our partners. UNICEF has undertaken key partnerships via ATscale, AT2020 and the World Health Organization (WHO).

ATscale: To address the gaps in available assistive products worldwide, a global partnership comprised of 11 organizations, including UNICEF, launched the ATscale global partnership in 2018. The focus is to bring assistive products to children in five categories: hearing aids, wheelchairs, glasses, prosthetics & associated devices, and assistive digital devices & software.

AT2030: AT2030 is a global programme for innovating and scaling assistive products via four main activities: data & evidence, innovation, country implementation, and capacity & participation. It is led by the Global Disability Innovation Hub, with UNICEF as an active partner. With an investment of £20 million by UK Aid, the programme's goal is to reach nine million people directly and six million more people through life-changing assistive products.

WHO: UNICEF and WHO have established a taskforce for accelerating the inclusion of quality assistive products and services in [UNICEF's Supply Catalogue](#). Through interagency collaboration and the development of guidance manuals, UNICEF and WHO are using each organization's strengths to amplify the accessibility and availability of appropriate assistive technology.

ATscale Founding Partners

UNICEF, Government of Kenya, World Health Organization, International Disability Alliance, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Global Disability Innovation Hub, China Disabled Persons' Federation, Norwegian Agency for Development, United States Agency for International Development, United Kingdom Department for International Development, UN Secretary-General's Envoy for Financing Health MDGs and for Malaria.

Essential assistive technology publications

When developing, purchasing and implementing assistive technology, it's essential to understand the specific needs and environmental constraints of the products. Such knowledge will advance inclusivity and reduce financial deficits caused by erroneous product procurement. UNICEF and WHO seek to build global uniform standards via two publications.

- **Procurement manual:** [The manual for public procurement of assistive products, accessories, spare parts, and related services](#) sets out the key steps and good practices to strengthen countries' capacity in procuring assistive technology products.
- **Assistive Product Specification (APS) 26:** This is a key resource for making assistive products available at an affordable price worldwide. It documents the technical specs for 26 prioritized products. The selection is based on [WHO's 2016 Assistive Products Priority List](#), which categorizes products into six broad domains: mobility, vision, hearing, communication, cognition and environment. This is the first time that quality specs for assistive products is made globally available, resulting in a higher quality of products for children with disabilities.

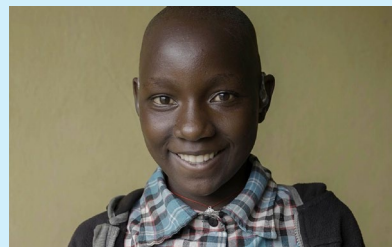
For more information, support procuring Assistive Technology or to support this vital work, please contact:

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Hearing Aids

Pascaline, 13, from Rwanda, has moderate-to-severe hearing loss. She could only hear her mother when she spoke very loudly and faced her. She received two UNICEF-supplied hearing aids in May 2022 and could immediately hear and speak with her mother.



The hearing aids cost \$118 each when procured through UNICEF thanks to our purchasing power. The exact item cost as much as \$2,000 in Rwanda at the time.

Disability-friendly Latrine



The [Disability-Friendly Squatting Plate Add-on](#) is an example of how UNICEF is making existing products more inclusive.

The add-on attaches to the standard latrine squatting plate dispatched in emergencies. It provides handrails and seating for children and adults with disabilities who have difficulties safely accessing sanitation services, especially those with trouble squatting.

"He can hold the handles on the sides when he sits so I don't have to hold him. I just watch and make sure he's okay," says Monira. Her son, Hashim, has an intellectual impairment, making it difficult to access sanitation services.

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