

Appropriate and Quality Wheelchairs

unicef 
for every child

Supply Division



The challenge

[An estimated 1 in 10 of the world's children live with a disability](#). They are among the most marginalized, facing daily discrimination.

Assistive products, such as wheelchairs, are crucial to help ensure their inclusion. A wheelchair means a child or young person can attend school and be included in play, increasing their chances of completing their education, finding employment as an adult, living independently and contributing to and being included in their community.

However, [only 1 in 10 children in low- and middle-income countries who need a wheelchair have one](#), compared to 95 per cent in wealthy nations.

Wheelchairs are highly technical pieces of equipment, which can make procuring them challenging. There is also a misconception that all wheelchairs are the same. Often the cheapest type – a transport chair – is procured. These break down quickly if used outdoors. The wrong type or an inappropriately fitted chair can also cause a child more harm than good, leading to pressure sores and postural damage. If untreated, pressure sores can be dangerous, particularly in areas far from medical care.

The response

UNICEF introduced eight different types of wheelchairs into the [Supply Catalogue](#) including active, rough terrain and postural support chairs, in adult and child sizes.

UNICEF is now able to offer a full range of paediatric wheelchairs to government partners and development programmes, a first for a UN agency.

Three types of cushions are also available – a crucial element for comfort, postural support and to prevent pressure sores.

All new products have been reviewed against the World Health Organizations [Assistive Product Specifications](#) to ensure they are robust, high quality and appropriate for use in challenging settings, such as a dry and dusty refugee camp.

Through global tenders, UNICEF, working with the World Health Organization, negotiated some of the lowest prices per globally. Quality-assured and low-cost wheelchairs can now be quickly and easily ordered by governments and partners, despite their highly technical nature. UNICEF actively provides support to governments and partners looking to procure through the global tenders.

This initiative is part of UNICEF's wider aim to contribute to 500 million people gaining access to assistive products by 2030, the goal of [ATscale](#), the global partnership for assistive technology. This includes working with the [AT2030 Programme](#), a global programme to bring greater focus to assistive technology.

The impact

By providing access to quality and appropriate wheelchairs UNICEF is enabling children to live healthy, productive and dignified lives. A wheelchair gives a child or young person greater independence and freedom of movement, enabling them to access school and job opportunities, as well as be included in society, preventing loneliness, building self-esteem and a sense of belonging. This initiative also contributes to [SDG 10, reducing inequalities](#).

Key figures

Issue

240 million [children globally \(1 in 10\) have a disability](#).

Only 1 in 10 [children who need a wheelchair have one, in low- and middle-income countries, compared to 95 per cent in wealthy nations](#).

9 in 10 [people who need an assistive device globally do not have access](#).

49 per cent: [Children with a disability are 49 per cent more likely to have never attended school, compared to their peers](#).

Response

8 different types of wheelchairs in both adult and child sizes introduced to the [Supply Catalogue](#), along with 3 types of support cushion.

\$385 can provide an active chair, helping a child attend school, be included in play, secure future employment and participate in their community.

9 to 1 [return on investment](#), on funding to assistive technology, with positive ripple effects across society.

Appropriate and Quality Wheelchairs



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“Before I had the wheelchair my brother used to push me on a stroller.

The wheelchair helped because before I had to bend down all the time. Now I am able to pay attention to the teacher. My back does not hurt anymore, and I am starting to get better at school.

My dream is to become a doctor.”

Aseel, 8, received a wheelchair through a UNICEF-supported programme in the Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan.



[Video: Hear from Aseel and her father on how a wheelchair changed their lives.](#)

Wheelchairs available for procurement

One wheelchair is not the same as another. A chair must be the right type and size, fitted for each user based on their need and context. Eight different types of wheelchairs can be procured from the [UNICEF Supply Catalogue](#). UNICEF also provides support to governments and partners to procure and implement these low-cost, high-quality products through our global contracts. See contact details below.



Active rough terrain chairs (rigid frame) are primarily for people who self-propel, this chair is robust and durable, suitable for long-term use outside.



Active urban chairs (foldable or rigid frame, or foldable high support) are primarily for people who self-propel, suitable for indoor and outdoor use in cities. People with advanced mobility skills may also use them for short distances on uneven terrain. They are ideal for an active child and come in **foldable** or **rigid frame** models. They also come in an additional foldable model with **extra support**, including a high back and armrests, suitable for new wheelchair users, the elderly or stroke patients.



Dual terrain intermediate active chairs (foldable or rigid frame) are a slightly more robust version of the active urban chair, designed to also be used in urban and rural environments. These are available as **foldable** or **rigid frame**.



Postural support chairs are the most advanced category of wheelchair, these larger chairs provide support on the sides, back and neck of patients. They can be both assistant controlled and self-propelled.



Transport chairs are designed for short-term use as an assistant controlled indoor wheelchair for transferring patients. They are not suitable for long-term use outside and will break down quickly. They cannot be customized to fit each user, which can cause health issues if used long-term.

Transform lives with assistive products

An assistive product can transform a child's life, unlocking access to education and employment. Assistive technology also results in an estimated **9:1 return on investment**, with positive ripple effects across societies.

With your support more children can access a wheelchair reach their full potential. Contact us about the UNICEF Assistive Technology Product Fund to learn more.

\$300 can provide a **dual terrain active wheelchair for use in cities and rural areas.**

\$357 can provide a **rough terrain active chair suitable for long-term use outside.**

\$470 can provide a **postural support wheelchair.**

For more information or support procuring wheelchairs or to support Assistive Technology programming please contact:

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