



African Community on Assistive technology

ACAT wishes you the best for 2021!

ACAT, administered by the Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation studies at Stellenbosch University has moved its list serve to function within the GATE community mednet platform. All ACAT members benefit now from GATE and ACAT communications.

Other recent activities include ACATs participation in an AT workshop at the Africa Network for Evidence-to-Action in Disability (AfriNEAD) conference (read more further on), presenting about ACAT to the Africa Rehabilitation Network and participating with WHO Africa and other stakeholders in developing the Regional Framework to improve AT access in Africa (read more further on).

Coming up: Creation of a directory of ACAT members to assist members in networking. To be included please share details of your interest and involvement in AT (50 words) with suronav@sun.ac.za. Nomination of a representative managing body for ACAT. This could be you! And a survey to identify members' knowledge needs to develop educational discussions on specific topics.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

- **WHO AFRICA**
- **GLOBAL NEWS**
- **DATES TO REMEMBER**
- **DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA**

Thank-you for the contributions to the 2nd quarterly newsletter. And a great appreciation to FATO for the translation. Enjoy it and share.

We welcome future contributions to
nikseymour@gmail.com

To join ACAT click [here](#)

WHO Africa

Millions of Africans are still deprived of basic rights. More than two hundred million people, the number of people in Africa who need at least one assistive product (AP), with a projection of four hundred million by 2050. Unfortunately, only about 15 to 25% of those in need of AP have access to them.

In 2018, the World Health Assembly adopted the Resolution WHA71.8 on ensuring access to quality AT at an affordable cost. Following this resolution, The African Ministers of Health and Heads of delegations, during attending the 69th Regional Committee for Africa requested the WHO secretariat to develop a regional framework to address the specific need of the region.

It is against this background that WHO convened a High-Level Regional Consultation for the development of the Regional Framework for Improving Access to Assistive Technology in the African Region in December 2020. During 3 days, more than 85 delegates from African countries, civil society organizations and partners, discuss the challenges encountered in the AT ecosystem and identify key strategic interventions for better access to AT on the continent. To support decision-making, delegates intensively reviewed evidence collected between 2019 to 2020 by WHO AFRO through annual rapid assessment survey. Reports can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Built around four key areas of intervention: Policy, Products, Personnel and Provision of services, this regional framework aims to guide Member States in the planning and implementation of priority interventions and provides Member States with effective policy actions to increase availability and affordability of AT.

The 71st Regional Committee for Africa will examine the framework for improving access to assistive technology and endorse action to fill the gap in the African region in August 2021.

Assessing the need using rATA

In 2020, WHO launched an initiative to support the Member States in measuring need, demand, and barriers to access AT through national household surveys using the WHO's rapid Assistive Technology Assessment (rATA) tool. A three-day online workshop was held in November to provide the national survey coordinators with the necessary skills and competencies to support the implementation of rATA in their countries. The workshop was attended by 122 participants from 17 countries including Togo, Mozambique, Snegeal, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Liberia and Rwanda.

(extract from the GATE Newsletter Oct to Dec 2020)



The World Report on Hearing

March 3rd 2021 marks World Hearing Day and will also be the much anticipated launch of the World Report on Hearing by the World Hearing Forum (WHF), a global network of stakeholders promoting Ear and Hearing Care (EHC) in its complete definition worldwide.

The WHF is urging stakeholders to bring visibility to the report. WHO intends to reach, raise awareness with, and mobilize action among national governments, international NGOs and development agencies, as well as all stakeholders in the field of hearing care.

Join the WHO hosted [Facebook group](#)

Contribution by Victor De Andrade Victor.DeAndrade@wits.ac.za

UNICEF Collects Testimonies from Children and Youth Who Use Assistive Technology

As UNICEF offers support to governments interested in expanding programmes that support the use of assistive technology (AT), ranging from wheelchairs to hearing aids, eyeglasses, prosthetics, and white canes, it also seeks to collect qualitative testimonies from children and youth who already use AT of any kind. Our objective is to gather interviews with children expressing the difference AT makes in their daily lives.

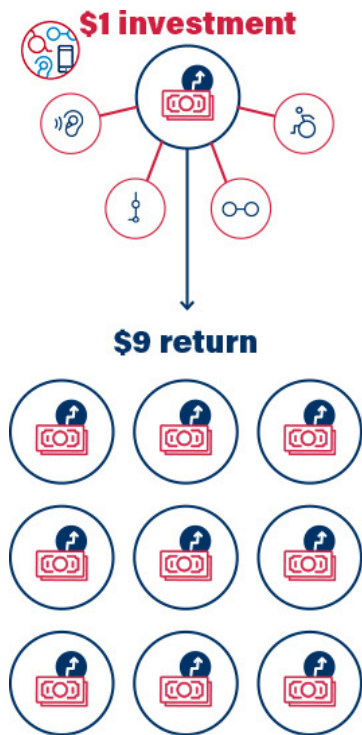
If you are a parent or legal guardian of a child or youth who has greater access to play, study, or social activities thanks to AT, please share his or her story with us. Please e-mail a brief description of how much AT has helped your child to: disabilities@unicef.org

Make sure to include the following information: your full name as the parent or legal guardian, the full name of the child, age of the child/young person, gender, your phone number, city, state, and country, as well as the AT he or she uses and a brief description of the benefits it has brought him or her.

The contributions will be collected until April 26, 2021, and some families will be contacted for a possible interview. Aligned with UNICEF's personal data protection rules (POLICY/DFAM/2020/001), each contributor will be requested to sign a letter of consent.

Disability Section, UNICEF NYHQ, For every child, inclusion.

The Case for Investing in Assistive Technology



The Case for Investing in Assistive Technology (AT) that was published in December 2020 by ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, describes the enormous gains that access to AT can have in health, for the community and the economy. The figures are dramatic: Investment in the provision of four assistive products - hearing aids, prostheses, eyeglasses, and wheelchairs - will result in a return on investment of 9:1. Having access to AT can make the difference between failure or success in school, between a job or unemployment, between a life of opportunity or a life of dependency. For example, for a child in a low- or middle-income country, access to AT can make a difference of \$100,000 in lifetime income.

Investing in assistive technology makes good economic sense. It is both the right thing and the smart thing to do.

With this investment case, ATscale calls on governments, including those of low- and middle-income countries, and donor organisations to “leave no one behind”, which must include people who need AT. It is time to prioritise action and investment in AT – for the 90% still in need around the world.



Case study: Hearing Again

Shakira is a 13-year-old girl from Malawi who developed hearing loss following meningitis at the age of five. Her parents realised she was having difficulty hearing when she stopped regularly speaking. She could lip read and speak a bit, but only her parents could fully understand her.

Shakira's mother, Famely, observed that Shakira was growing increasingly isolated due to her hearing loss. She was struggling to fit in with her peers and her confidence was diminishing. Following information provided at school, Famely brought her to a local hearing screening outreach in January.

Shakira was assessed and diagnosed with bilateral hearing loss. She was measured and fitted with hearing aids in February, and both her mother and she were overwhelmed by the marked change in her hearing.

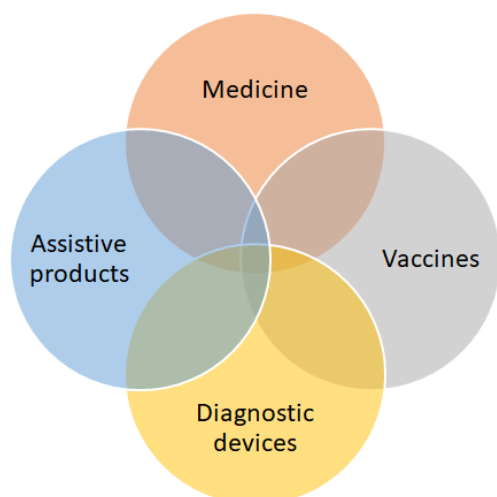
Since receiving hearing aids, Shakira's interaction and communication with her friends has vastly improved. Just as importantly, Shakira's teacher says that she is completely different in class: she is much better able to communicate with the teacher and her fellow students.

Developments in Africa

Collaboration in the AT sector

At the start of December 2020 AfriNEAD hosted its 6th conference virtually from Cape Town, South Africa with the theme: Disability Unplugged – Beyond Conventions and Charters, what really matters to People with Disabilities in Africa? The vision of AfriNEAD is to become a significant contributor to and facilitator around the needs of people with disabilities in Africa, by assisting in translating existing and new disability research into meaningful evidence-based advocacy, practice, products and policy.

One of the workshops within the conference aimed at Promoting sharing and collaboration on assistive technology initiatives in Africa. The workshop brought African stakeholders in assistive technology together to discuss ways and opportunities for sharing information, knowledge and skills.



Presentations and a lively discussion included several leading international figures in AT such as Chapal Khasnabis of the WHO and Mac MacLachlan of the All Institute alongside regional organisations including ACAT, FATO, and Edit Microsystems. A key outcome emphasised the crucial need for the African AT sector to collaborate and to become a strong force representing and progressing AT in Africa. Doing away with outdated models of practice, making use of global assessment tools, innovating solutions with function at the heart and ensuring prominence of the AT users voice was stated as vital elements to strengthen the AT ecosystem.

A report on the workshop will be prepared and submitted to the Global Report on Assistive Technology and an article will be presented in a special issue of the African journal of Disability.



Change of the name of FATO

After 25 years of existence and various activities on the continent, given the multidisciplinary nature of the African Federation of Orthopedic Technicians, and in order to further federate rehabilitation stakeholders to significantly develop the rehabilitation sector in Africa, a change of identity was necessary. The idea was therefore subject to a general vote in order to have an identity that really corresponds to the new image of FATO.

The results of the vote therefore led to the change of the name of FATO which became: African Federation of Rehabilitation Professionals. Even if the name changes, the acronym FATO remains. It is therefore under this new name that FATO will continue to operate and help to the development of Rehabilitation in Africa.



Meet Joshua

Joshua, an 8 year old is currently a student at Magereza Primary school in Moshi, Kilimanjaro. Not being able to walk since he was born, his parents have to carry him to school in the morning and from school in the evening.

Through collaboration between Songambebe Organisation and partners Toa Nafasi and Kyaro assistive Joshua was found and his mobility needs assessed. He has now been provided with a wheelchair adapted to suit his needs. Joshua's parents can now drive him in his wheelchair to school instead of carrying him on their back. While at school, Joshua can interact more with his classmates and move around the school easily. He has much greater independence with his new wheelchair.

The Songambebe team plan to participate in Kili Marathon Fun 5 km to fundraise to support children with disabilities to access appropriate wheelchairs.



Strengthening rehabilitation services and mobility device provision

The African Organization for the Development of Centres for Persons with Disabilities (OADCPH) is a unique non-governmental organization (NGO) in Africa. It was founded in 2011 and is based in Togo, West Africa, since 2012. OADCPH was created to support the development of rehabilitation services and mobility aids on the African continent. The actions of OADCPH aim to facilitate access to assistive technologies, and particularly access to mobility aids (prostheses, orthoses, wheelchairs, and walking aids).

Five axes of intervention

1. Providing education for rehabilitation professionals, service managers, and administrative staff: Since 2013, 44 modules have been developed
2. Advisory support for the development of rehabilitation services and technical issues
3. Development of innovative solutions: products, services, models.
2. Promoting access to services through facilitating donations
3. Supplying mobility aids, consumables, raw materials, and rehabilitation equipment by sourcing from various international suppliers.



For more information see their website www.oadcph.org or contact is masse.niang@gmail.com

The University of Rwanda is open to international students for Prosthetics and Orthotics training.

On 17 December 2020, the Rwandan Minister of Education inaugurated a new state of the art Prosthetic and Orthotic Laboratory at the Remera campus of the University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, in Kigali. The new facility is equipped to host 24 students at a time to practice making prosthetic and orthotic devices.

The laboratory was constructed and equipped by the Rwandan Government with financial and technical support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Liliane Foundation, through the National Union of Disability Organisations in Rwanda (NUDOR). Ottobock engineers also contributed to the design.

The University of Rwanda has been training professionals in Prosthetics and Orthotics since 2011 and 53 students have now graduated from the three-year Advanced Diploma in Orthopaedic Technology (ADOT). This program is accredited by the International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) as Category II, providing the qualification of Associate Prosthetist and Orthotist.

The ADOT is a modular training program with 360 credits gained over 3 years. For more information, please contact Mr Robert Clement HAKORIMANA (hakorimanarc73@gmail.com, r.c.hakorimana@ur.ac.rw).



INTERESTING READING

- Read about Estimating Assistive product need in Cameroon and India, published Nov 2020 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tmi.13523>
- Explore the South African Health Review on 'Access to health care for persons with disabilities in South Africa' <https://www.hst.org.za/publications/Pages/SAHR2020.aspx>

A springboard for the promotion and development of the Disability sector in Africa

FATO recently signed a partnership agreement with TELE-ECOLE, in the framework of a television program called HANDICAP TV AFRICA: The African channel dedicated to disability.

"TELE-ECOLE" is a television channel, newly created in Senegal, with the main objectives of supporting and promoting training and education, in Senegal and in Africa. This new television channel, aware of the various issues and barriers regarding the subject of disability situations in Africa, seeks also to bring its contribution to the training and education in Africa, by the creation of a special Program under the name: Handicap TV AFRICA. Issues relating to "disability and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" This subject is little known and misunderstood by the African population, causing enormous barriers and obstacles to its development on the continent.

This signing of an agreement will allow FATO to bring its great expertise in the field enabling Handicap TV Africa to succeed in the noble mission for which it was set up. Already, the chairmanship of the Scientific Committee of Handicap TV Africa has been entrusted to Masse Niang, the President of FATO, who in turn has launched the net to other African skills to constitute a powerful and effective scientific committee.



Shigute is 73. He lives in Meki in central Ethiopia where he makes a living as a farmer. But when his vision started deteriorating, working the land became more and more difficult.

Through our eye care clinic in Meki, Shigute received glasses, helping him to see clearly again.

"The doctor and the nurses in the clinic tested my eyes with their machines and gave me glasses. I was so happy to learn my problem could be fixed with simple glasses. When I put them on, I can see everything that is close to me. I can return to my daily farming routine with new and full energy," he said

Taken from Helpge website

<https://www.helpage.org/where-we-work/africa/ethiopia/>

D A T E S T O R E M E M B E R

2021

Southern Africa AT Expo. (SAATE) Theme: Wake up and do it for yourself: To promote and advance local AT solutions for Southern Africa. Namibia, Windhoek. 14th - 17th September 2021
ISPO 18th World Congress - Guadalajara, Mexico - November 1 – 4, 2021

2022

FATO Conference– Marakesh - Morroca, 29 March - 2 April 2022 Equitable and universal access to rehabilitation services and assistive devices in Africa. Please mark your calendars!

Other

CBR world congress – Uganda, Kampala. Date TBC
Other Global conferences - See <https://www.gaato.org/>

To join ACAT <https://mednet-communities.net/gate/acat/>