

Why assistive technology matters for humanitarian contexts

Aleksandra, 13, has cerebral palsy, and received a wheelchair under the AT10 programme in Ukraine. ATscale supported the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, through the World Health Organization European Regional Office, to provide WHO's 'AT10', a kit of the 10 assistive products that people displaced due to emergencies need the most.

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For someone forced to flee their home in a humanitarian crisis, and for those who acquire new impairments during conflict and disaster, having access to assistive technology can be crucial to survival, for accessing humanitarian assistance and information, and restoring livelihoods. People affected by humanitarian emergencies should have access to national systems for assistive technology provision, including in the acute phase of emergency response, even if they are non-citizens (refugees). The needs of users of assistive technology should be included in all emergency and humanitarian relief efforts provided by humanitarian agencies and government services.

The global **mortality rate** of persons with disabilities in disasters is



4 TIMES HIGHER

than for persons without disabilities.

Globally, up to

30%

of the population needs one or more assistive products. In emergency contexts and humanitarian settings, this figure might be higher.



In low-income countries - even in the absence of a humanitarian emergency - only

10%

of people have the assistive technology they need.

For a child in a low- or middle-income country, access to assistive technology and education can make a difference of

US\$ 100,000

in lifetime income.

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Access to assistive technology in a humanitarian setting is a human right. Unlike food, water, shelter, sanitation, health care and protection however, assistive technology is often not seen as an important part of the humanitarian response. The humanitarian system still does not systematically include older people and persons with disabilities and provision of assistive technology in humanitarian settings is very limited, specialized and small scale. The provision of assistive technology in humanitarian contexts is a human right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 11.

Following a crisis, lost and damaged devices need replacing and people with new impairments need support. People who used assistive technology before a humanitarian crisis may have lost or broken their assistive products, or be unable to use them. Some may never have had access to assistive technology in the first place; others may have acquired new injuries or impairments. In emergency and humanitarian situations, assistive technology can play a critical role to ensure that access to goods and services is universal.

The need for assistive technology in humanitarian contexts will increase. During humanitarian crises, the number of survivors with impairments has increased as mortality rates have gone down. Due to ageing and noncommunicable diseases, more people need to use assistive technology in general. This means assistive technology needs among populations in crisis settings are likely to continue to rise. This growing need cannot be ignored.



Inclusion is key to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leave no one behind. There will not be full inclusion while people are unable to access assistive technology. Assistive technology cuts across all 17 SDGs and is particularly relevant to some.

Assistive Technology is an umbrella term for assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, prostheses, eyeglasses or digital devices, and their related systems and services.

ATscale is a cross-sector global partnership with a mission to improve people's lives through assistive technology. It catalyzes 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.

Together, let's ensure access to assistive technology for all who need it.