SAFOD VISION ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

AT-INFO-MAP

gkayange@safod.net

BY GEORGE MWIKA KAYANGE | SAFOD DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

What is SAFOD

- Formed in 1986 by persons with disabilities as a federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

- Leading disability-focused network.

- Engaged in coordination of activities of DPOs in Southern Africa.

- We work in the SADC countries.

- Coordinate our programs and activities through our national affiliates.

Current AT Situation in Southern Africa

- □ 85-95% of persons with disabilities who need assistive technology (AT) do not have access.

- □ Most people are not aware of the wide range of AT products that could be available.

- □ The cost of AT is generally very high in Southern Africa.

Current AT Situation in Southern Africa

- The high cost of AT results in governments and other buyers purchasing fewer or selected products only.

- The provision of AT is often limited to the health care departments only.

- There are often significant delays in the provision of AT in Southern Africa.

Current AT Situation in Southern Africa

- Low availability of information-related ATs such as for persons with visual impairments.

- Some charities and private importers are providing inappropriate AT products or AT without services, which can cause harm.

Current AT Situation in Southern Africa

- There are not enough people trained to assess, prescribe, fit (if needed) AT and train users.

- There is a lack of repair services for AT and AT are often abandoned.

Our Vision for Southern Africa

☐ SAFOD has been exploring solutions that can address challenges outlined thus far, now and in future.

☐ We have worked in collaboration other strategic partners – mainly the Universities of Washington in the US and Loughborough in the UK.

Our Vision for Southern Africa

- Our overall vision:

    to act as a holistic advocacy institution for people with disabilities in Southern Africa; provide advice and support across all aspects of everyday living and working, including assistive technology.

Our Vision for Southern Africa

- We seek to provide inclusive pathways for social and technological change

- That deliver a more environmentally sustainable and inclusive future for people with disabilities in Southern Africa.

- To help identify these needs and aspirations and realize solutions through appropriate application of available knowledge and technologies for Southern Africa.

Establishment of an Online Clearinghouse for AT

□ We want to establish a clearinghouse that builds on the work we have already done with University of Washington and Loughborough University

- The AT-Info-Map dataset,
- The At Catalogue, and
- The AT Guide

Online Clearinghouse for AT

☐ The online clearinghouse to document information that the Mobile App is not able to collect

- ■ E.g., product level information, product photos, specs, etc. –

☐ Educate all stakeholders about the wide range of AT products that are possible by sharing information.

Online Clearinghouse for AT

- ☐ To provide tutorial information in multiple languages about the WHO's Priority Assistive Products List and other available ATs (including video guides and demos, audio lessons, etc.).
- ☐ To detail how each AT is used;
- ☐ Provide expert advice for those with AT questions;
- ☐ Provide information on new AT updates/releases and related costs, etc.

Develop a Regional Multi-stakeholder Advocacy Program

☐ Advocate for governments/policy makers to create policies that result in more affordable AT such as VAT/tax exemptions, and price mark-ups restrictions.

☐ Advocate for local production where appropriate technology exist.

Multi-stakeholder Advocacy Program

- Advocate for government/policy makers to budget specifically for AT in different sectors.

- Advocate for medical aid companies to cover a wide range of AT products.

- Identify and support suppliers who offer appropriate and affordable products.

Multi-stakeholder Advocacy Program

- Advocate for government/policy makers to mainstream the provision of AT through all relevant government departments
  - *such as education and labor, as well as through the private sector.*

Multi-stakeholder Advocacy Program

☐ Intensify advocacy to increase the range of AT as well as budgets for purchasing AT within relevant government departments.

☐ Continue advocating for increased domestication of relevant international human rights instruments such as the UNCRPD, the Marrakech Treaty, etc.

Develop a Regional Capacity-building Program/Hub

- ☐ To train mid- and grassroots level personnel to provide some categories of AT.

- ☐ Leverage on public-private partnerships to improve access to AT supplied through professionals only.

- ☐ Provision of ongoing training of AT service providers on best practices regarding AT products and provision.

Capacity-building Program/Hub

- To support strategic partners/entrepreneurs in establishing service centers for AT repairs and/or add AT repair to existing engineering and maintenance department services

- To support educational institutions and professional associations developing training programs on AT maintenance and repair.

Conclusion

- To reiterate that SAFOD won't be able to pursue our visions for Southern Africa on our own.

- Collaboration with other stakeholders will continue to remain our driving force towards achieving the plans.

Questions and Feedback?

☐ Meanwhile, if you have questions about the project, or the app or web database, feel free to contact us:

    George Kayange - gkayange@safod.net

    Mussa Chiwaula - mchiwaula@safod.net

    Website: www.atinfomap.org