



Workshop on Assistive Technology Procurement in Dushanbe, Tajikistan

19-20 November 2019

CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

Access to assistive technology (AT) is a key factor in improving health outcomes and safeguarding social inclusion. AT refers to the systems and services used to deliver assistive products (AP) that maintain and improve a person's function and independence such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, pill organizers, augmentative communication devices, and incontinence products. Everyone can benefit from using AT, particularly older people, people living with disabilities, or chronic conditions.

Over one billion people need one or more AT, yet more than 900 million people do not have access to the life changing AT they need to lead dignified and inclusive lives. Lack of access to AT often results in the individual and their family members being isolated and excluded from education, work, family and community life. Progress in accelerating access to AT is slow and sporadic, and investments are uncoordinated. Supply and demand for assistive products and services are limited by numerous barriers such as stigma, insufficient capacity, inadequate resources, scarce financing, and lack of awareness of the need for AT. In addition, many countries do not have sufficient technical expertise on AT. As a result, procurement of AP and service is conducted on an ad-hoc basis and is not always guided by adequate technical specifications or international/regional/national standards, leading to the procurement of inappropriate, sub-standard products (e.g. some countries only specify 'wheelchair' on their tenders).

In the Seventy-first World Health Assembly, the WHA71.8 resolution on improving access to AT was adopted. The resolution mandates Member States to take effective actions in developing, implementing, and strengthening policies and programmes that improve access to AT. In July 2018, ATscale, the Global Partnership for AT was launched with the goal to reach 500 million more people with AT by 2030. To inform the work by this Global Partnership, DIFD has funded a global programme - 'AT2030' - that aims to identify and address some key barriers that inhibit access to AT, such as alleviating the challenges of procuring appropriate, quality AT in a timely manner.

To strengthen and guide procurement processes, WHO and UNICEF have been developing: 1) a set of specifications for 33 priority products (called Assistive Products Specifications; APS); and 2) a procurement guide to inform officers/managers involved in AT procurement processes. These tools are being developed with inputs from global AT experts and reviewed by WHO with support from Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS) and China Assistive Device and Technology Centre (CADTC).

To ensure that these tools are fit for purpose (particularly in lower resourced settings), partners of AT2030, UNICEF, WHO and CHAI are organizing a series of regional AT procurement workshops in 2019 and 2020 to strengthen country capacity to procure appropriate, quality AT that ultimately empowers and enables AT users.

Objectives:

The objectives of the technical workshop are to:

1. Bring country (procurement and programme) experts together to: 1) create awareness of the APS and procurement guide; 2) get input on how the APS and procurement guide can help build capacity to procure AT in countries; and 3) better understand how the APS and procurement guide can be feasibly implemented;
2. Raise awareness about the importance of having efficient and transparent procurement and supply management systems in place;
3. Discuss innovative in-country solutions to specific challenges when procuring assistive products;
4. Inform about the potential to add AP that meet APS requirements within the UNICEF Supply Division catalogue.

Expected participants:

The workshop aims to invite representatives from relevant ministries involved in AT coordination/management, procurement practitioners managing AT public procurement, technical experts involved in developing and/or using specifications for AT procurement, or similar.

The workshop will bring together participants from: Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. More participants, such as representatives from academia, NGOs, Disabled Persons Organizations related to AT, etc. from Tajikistan will participate in the workshop as the host country.

Methodology:

A mix of participatory, interactive and instructional approaches will be used and will focus on country driven approaches, allowing government representatives and partners to lead the production of the content during the event by participating in panel discussions and contributing through small-group and country team break-out sessions. The break-out sessions will be mostly interactive using group work, simulations, practical exercises and experience sharing. There will be sharing of common global principles, strategies and guidelines, combined with examples of application. The workshop will ensure optimal exchange of knowledge and experiences between countries in a safe and open environment.

Expected outcomes:

A primary outcome of the meeting is to identify priority actions that will meaningfully address persistent bottlenecks and gaps in AT procurement at the country and/or regional level, including those that may cut across multiple technical areas and sectors. These priority actions would be linked to specific means of improving access to AT through improved planning, financing, procurement and supply management.

A secondary outcome of the meeting is to identify how WHO, UNICEF, and CHAI can best support countries in increasing capacity to procure quality, appropriate, and affordable AT.

Proposed agenda:

The proposed agenda for the 2-day workshop on 19-20th November 2019, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan is:

Day 1

08:00-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:30	Welcome / introductions
09:30-11:00	Importance of AT: Framing the problem
11:00-11:30	<i>Break</i>
11:30-12:30	AT user perspective(s)
12:30-13:30	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30-17:00	Introduction of APS <i>(With break from 15:00-15:30)</i>
17:00-17:30	Wrap up
17:30-19:00	Social event

Day 2

09:00-09:30	Recap Day 1
09:30-10:15	Introduce UNICEF's work in procurement
10:15-10:45	Procurement guide and case examples/best practices
10:45-11:00	<i>Break</i>
11:00-12:15	Learnings on AT procurement in Tajikistan
12:15-13:15	<i>Lunch</i>
13:15-15:15	Working session* on procurement - break-out groups
15:15-15:45	<i>Break</i>
15:45-16:45	Present findings
16:45-17:00	Closing

*Working sessions are organized to foster participation and communication across countries.

- Each country will be asked to prepare, in advance, a brief presentation / poster about the current state of AT procurement in their respective countries. The organizers will provide a template for this presentation, and a template for data entry.
- During the working sessions, each country will be invited to present (10min); this session will be either for the full group or in break-out sessions, depending on the number of countries represented.
- Following these presentations, discussions will be facilitated to: 1) gather input on the usability and relevance of the 33 APS and procurement guide in addressing some of the procurement challenges countries face 2) brainstorm about potential activities that countries can take on to incorporate materials; and 3) discuss how accountability and follow-up will be ensured.
- After the presentations and discussions, findings will be presented.

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