

Zero Project announces Strategic Partners to bring Tech Forum to Nairobi, Mumbai, and Singapore

AT4D, Tech Mahindra Foundation, and UnExcluded join forces with the Essl Foundation to expand the Zero Project Technology Forum to Africa, India, and the Asia Pacific.

Vienna, April 30, 2026 — The Essl Foundation today announced strategic partnerships that will bring the Zero Project Technology Forum to new world regions for the first time. Assistive Technologies for Disability Trust (AT4D), the Tech Mahindra Foundation, and UnExcluded (Asia) Ltd. will each host regional editions of the forum in Africa, India, and the Asia Pacific respectively, connecting local Assistive Technology (AT) Innovators with Support Partners across their regions.

“Assistive technology is evolving rapidly. It's shaped by local needs, local ingenuity, and local ambition,” says Michael Fembek, CEO of the Zero Project. “What the Zero Project brings is a uniquely global, cross-sectoral network that can connect these innovators with the right support partners that allow their solutions to scale. Expanding the Tech Forum to Nairobi, Mumbai, and Singapore means that the innovations can better reach the people who need them — and that the world can learn from them. This is how we move the needle on disability inclusion: not from one center outward, but together, across borders and sectors.”

The Zero Project Technology Forum (Tech Forum) was established in 2023 and is held annually in Vienna, Austria, on the day prior to the Zero Project Conference. It brings together highly innovative technology-based solutions — from commercial ventures and social enterprises to foundations and NGOs — that advance accessibility and disability inclusion, and connects them with potential Support Partners: companies, investors, and organizations interested in scaling AT innovations or providing other forms of support.

Advancing Assistive Technology Innovations through collaboration

Each regional partner brings deep local expertise and existing networks to the collaboration. The regional Tech Forums are designed to support local AT Innovations and Support Partners; they are organized in close collaboration with the Zero Project Team to ensure that bridges are built between global and regional innovation ecosystems. Each edition is adapted to its regional context while remaining connected to the Vienna forum and to one another.

“Last year’s Inclusive Tech Forum in Singapore proved the strength of Southeast Asia’s innovation ecosystem—three solutions advanced to Vienna, and AiSee has already been adopted nationally,” says Gautham Devlekar, Director at UnExcluded. “Building on that momentum, our partnership with the Zero Project ensures that local breakthroughs connect to global scaling opportunities, embedding accessibility and disability inclusion into the fabric of technology worldwide.”

Bernard Chiira, CEO and Founder of AT4D adds: “All over the world, the future of accessibility and assistive tech is being built by innovators and entrepreneurs, but few get to know it. The Zero Project Technology Forum plays a crucial role in elevating such solutions so that we can achieve a world without barriers for persons with disabilities everywhere. AT4D is excited to partner with the Essl Foundation's Zero Project to bring the Forum to Nairobi in 2026.”

A new partnership has also formed in India to connect the global network with local innovators. “At Tech Mahindra Foundation, The Ability Network is designed to bring together the full disability inclusion ecosystem in

India—connecting solution providers, NGOs, government, and persons with disabilities to enable scale,” says Chetan Kapoor, CEO at Tech Mahindra Foundation. "The Zero Project Technology Forum complements this by linking The Ability Network to global Support Partners and international assistive technology innovations. This strengthens access to markets and partnerships for Indian innovators, while also bringing proven global solutions into India’s inclusion ecosystem.

About the Zero Project Technology Forum format

The Tech Forum is an in-person event where AT Innovators present high-quality pitches on a professional, accessible stage, followed by a curated series of one-to-one meetings arranged ahead of the event. Support Partners gain exclusive access to the most promising AT innovations in their region, while innovators explore concrete pathways to growth and scale.

Approximately two months before each event, the Zero Project Team screens AT Innovations identified through its annual research process, strategic partners, and network members — evaluating each for innovation, growth potential, and readiness to scale. Targeted matchmaking is then conducted based on the needs of innovators and the offerings of Support Partners.

The regional Tech Forums are held in connection with leading local conferences: On June 5 in Nairobi, following the Inclusive Africa Conference by InAble; on September 7 in Mumbai, preceding the Zero Project Conference India hosted by Youth4Jobs; and on November 9 in Singapore, preceding the Zero Project Asia Pacific Symposium organized by SG Enable. This alignment allows participants to continue conversations across multiple event days.

The next global Zero Project Technology Forum in Vienna is planned for Tuesday, February 9, 2027, the day before the Zero Project Conference at the United Nations Office.

About AT4D

Assistive Technologies for Disability Trust (AT4D) is a disability-led, innovation-driven organization based in Nairobi, Kenya. More than an organization, AT4D is a movement advancing innovation, inclusion, and independence for persons with disabilities across Africa. We take an ecosystem approach, bringing together assistive technology startups, funders, policymakers, and communities to co-create a space where assistive technology can truly thrive. Our mission: to ensure that assistive technology is a right, not a privilege by empowering persons with disabilities to lead, live, and thrive in a more inclusive world.

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About Tech Mahindra Foundation & The Ability Network

Tech Mahindra Foundation (TMF), the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of Tech Mahindra Limited, a Mahindra group company. Since 2006, guided by the vision of Empowerment through Education, the Foundation drives impactful initiatives with a focus on disability inclusion. The Ability Network (TAN) is an attempt to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities (PwDs) at scale by creating an inclusive network of all relevant stakeholders: solution providers, NGOs, assistive technology enablers, the government, and the PwDs themselves.



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About UnExcluded

UnExcluded is a social innovation platform dedicated to undoing exclusion by embedding accessibility and inclusion into technology, business, and community ecosystems. Through convenings such as the Inclusive Tech Forum Southeast Asia 2025 and partnerships with the Zero Project, UnExcluded connects innovators, investors, and scaling partners to accelerate assistive technologies that remove barriers for persons with disabilities. With a focus on collaboration, impact, and global reach, UnExcluded works to ensure that inclusive innovation becomes the default, not the exception.

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About the Essl Foundation and the Zero Project

The Essl Foundation MGE gemeinnützige Privatstiftung is an Austrian Foundation established in 2007 by Martin and Gerda Essl, and their children, for social purposes and scientific research. Its mission is to support social innovation, social entrepreneurship and persons with disabilities.

The Zero Project's mission is working for a world with zero barriers. Worldwide, the Zero Project finds and shares solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities, as intended and encouraged by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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