



Zero Project Champions

Scaling Innovations: Strategies that work

24 case studies of organizations scaling up internationally
to support accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities



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Scaling Innovations: Strategies that work

24 case studies of organizations scaling up internationally
to support accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities

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Imprint

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Zero Project Report 2025: Employment, and ICT

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Zero Project Report 2024: Education, and ICT

Zero Project Report 2023: Independent Living, Political Participation, and ICT

Zero Project Report 2022: Accessibility

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The composition of geographical regions and selected economic and other groupings used in this report is based on UN Statistics (www.unstats.org), including the borders of Europe, and on the Human Development Index (hdr.undp.org).

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Content

FOREWORD

| | |
|---|---|
| Michael Fembek, CEO of the Zero Project..... | 4 |
| Bernd Schramm, Global Programme for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, GIZ | 5 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 6 |
|--------------------------------|----------|

THE RESEARCH

| | |
|--|----|
| About innovations and the different methods to let them grow | 16 |
| Expert comment by Georg Schön on readiness for replication and scaling | 19 |
| Stages of Scaling: From Proof-of-Concept to Sustainable Scaling | 20 |
| Scalability: What makes a good innovation also a scalable innovation | 22 |
| Expert comment by Gidi Grinstein on ‘moonshot thinking’ and the importance of ‘makers’ | 24 |
| The themes of the Zero Project | 27 |
| Entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and copy entrepreneurs | 28 |
| Discussion with Bob Ludke: “Resilience and lived experience” | 30 |
| The ultimate goals of scaling: available, affordable, sustainably funded, and more | 34 |
| The role of the public sector | 36 |
| Expert comment by Anthony Giannoumis on investing in the founder’s growth | 39 |
| The value-chain in scaling across country borders | 40 |
| The overarching importance of participation and inclusiveness | 42 |
| Blunders and failures: Knowing what does not work | 44 |

SCALING STRATEGIES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Strategy 1: Establishing one’s own organization in the target country | |
| Specialisterne, Ugani Prosthetics | 46 |
| Strategy 2: Engaged licensing partnerships for quality ICT-based services | |
| DeafTawk, Egalité, Livox | 52 |
| Strategy 3: Sales and distribution contracts for ready-made products | |
| Hable One, Reach & Match | 60 |
| Strategy 4: ICT-based services for business and private users | |
| Be My Eyes, Incluyeme.com, Nagish, SignLab, Tai Tanzania | 66 |
| Strategy 5: Low-cost licensing of trainings and services to social service providers | |
| Amar Seva Sangam, Enable Vaani, Jaipur Foot, NLR Indonesia, RIT/WAY Programme | 78 |
| Strategy 6: Using the resources of the education system and universities | |
| Benetech/Bookshare, REUT/TOM Global | 90 |
| Strategy 7: Using the resources of arts institutions and museums | |
| Capito, White Hands Chorus NIPPON | 96 |
| Strategy 8: Prestigious partnerships built on grant and government funding | |
| Karuna Foundation, RET Americas, Special Olympics | 102 |
| Terms used in this report | 110 |

TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT: SEE PAGE 110

A number of terms are used in this report with a specific meaning related to innovations and scaling of innovations. For a better understanding, it is recommended that you consult the explanations of terms.

“Knowing how to expand and adapt successful solutions.”



Michael Fembek, CEO of the Zero Project and author of this report

Over the past twelve years the Zero Project has been working to identify and share solutions that improve the lives of persons with disabilities. During that time, we have learned a great deal about what makes an innovation meaningful – but also about the limitations of innovation alone. A promising idea or product can change individual lives. But without a pathway for growth, its wider potential remains untapped. This report focuses on that next step: how to scale up (grow, copy, replicate) solutions that have already shown they work.

Scaling, replicating, copying, growing

This is the first time we have collected, analysed, and structured expertise on scaling innovative solutions in a single report. It is neither comprehensive nor the final word on the topic. Rather, it is intended as a practical contribution – a first attempt to bring clarity to a field where many decision-makers still face uncertainty. Innovative solutions are absolutely necessary for progress in inclusion and accessibility. But the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities depends on more than an ever-increasing number of them. It also depends on knowing how to expand and adapt successful approaches so they can serve many more people, in many more contexts.

Using the unique network and research

The Zero Project is in a position to contribute to this discussion. With more than a decade of research, a global network of partners, and ongoing collaboration with practitioners, we have had the opportunity to observe many innovations as they develop, mature, and in some cases scale. Since 2013 we have analysed and shortlisted around 3,000 innovations, and awarded almost 1,000 of them. And since 2018 our Scaling Solutions Programme has worked directly with over 76 initiatives from 37 countries, supporting their efforts to grow beyond their original settings. The insights gained from that work form the foundation of the research for this publication.

Innovating in the field of disability inclusion and accessibility brings specific responsibilities. Any serious work in this area must be rooted in participatory processes. The principle

of “Nothing about us without us” is not just a slogan – it is a requirement. Solutions must be co-created with persons with disabilities from the outset, at every stage of design, implementation, and evaluation. Without this, even well-intentioned efforts risk missing the mark or creating unintended barriers. This report reflects that understanding and highlights approaches that have succeeded by working in partnership with the communities they aim to serve.

In preparing “Zero Project Champions – Scaling Solutions: Strategies that Work” we worked closely with 24 organizations, each of them already active in transferring their solution to other countries or regions. We looked at how they approached the process of scaling, what strategies they used, and what kinds of partnerships made it possible. Eight main strategies emerged from this process. They range from franchising and licensing to open-source sharing and cooperation with public institutions. Each has distinct advantages and conditions for success.

What makes a good innovation also scalable

This report also highlights an important distinction: some innovations are effective in a specific setting but cannot easily be adapted elsewhere. Others are built in a way that allows for replication and growth, provided the right structures are in place. Understanding this difference is essential for anyone trying to support or implement inclusive practices at scale.

We have prepared this report with policy-makers, funders, and practitioners in mind – all those who are looking not only for ideas but for proven approaches. The case studies and strategies presented here are meant to support informed decisions, reduce avoidable mistakes, and strengthen cooperation across borders and sectors. In addition, experts and practitioners for scaling across borders have added their invaluable insights regarding the importance of entrepreneurship, replicability, and leadership.

We hope that this publication will be a useful reference for those committed to disability inclusion. It offers no simple solutions, but it does highlight models that have already demonstrated both impact and the ability to scale.

We see this as a starting point for further discussion, more targeted support, and a shared effort to ensure that effective innovations remove barriers – towards a world with zero barriers.

“Scaling disability innovations for a more inclusive world!”



Bernd Schramm, Global Programme for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Unlocking the power of innovation

Innovation has the potential to transform lives, and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of disability inclusion. Across the world, countless ground-breaking initiatives are tackling barriers, empowering persons with disabilities, and fostering a more inclusive society. However, the real challenge is not just developing innovative solutions but scaling them effectively to create widespread impact. The Zero Project Scale-Up Report is dedicated to addressing this challenge by identifying, showcasing, and supporting 24 outstanding disability-inclusive innovations that have already begun their journey of scaling across borders.

We, as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), are proud to support this vital report and the Scaling Solutions Programme of the Zero Project. For Germany, disability inclusion is not only a manifestation of human dignity but a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development.

Spotlighting 24 innovations ready to scale

The Zero Project Scale-Up Report highlights 24 pioneering disability-inclusive innovations from diverse sectors, including education, employment, accessibility, and assistive technologies. These solutions are not only proven to work but have also successfully replicated their models in at least one additional country. By featuring their scaling strategies, impact stories, and partnership opportunities, this report serves as a crucial resource for governments, businesses, non-profits, and international organizations looking to collaborate on expanding these solutions to new regions.

Each featured innovation embodies the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and adaptability. Whether through digital tools like AI-driven communication apps, or grassroots models empowering communities, these initiatives demonstrate that scaling solutions for disability inclusion can be successful.

Strengthening partnerships for greater impact

Scaling innovations requires strong and committed partnerships. The Zero Project Scale-Up Report provides a roadmap for how stakeholders – including policy makers, investors, civil society organizations, and the private sector – can support and engage with these fellows. Through collaborative efforts, we can bridge the gap between promising innovations and the resources needed for their expansion. The Scaling Solutions Programme, led by the Zero Project, plays a key role in facilitating these connections, ensuring that disability-inclusive solutions are not just developed but successfully implemented at scale in different contexts worldwide.

Presenting at the Global Disability Summit 2025

The Global Disability Summit 2025 in Berlin provides an exceptional opportunity to present the Zero Project Scale-Up Report and amplify the voices of disability innovators. Selected fellows from the report will share their experiences, challenges, and successes in scaling their solutions, offering valuable insights into what it takes to expand impactful initiatives globally.

Beyond the summit, this report will continue to serve as a reference point at major international gatherings, including the annual Zero Project Conference in Vienna. It will be made available online in an accessible format, ensuring that the rare knowledge and thought that it presents reach a wide audience.

A commitment to sustainable development

Scaling disability innovations is not just about expanding reach; it is about creating sustainable, long-term change. Our commitment to disability-inclusive development extends beyond this report. We continue supporting initiatives that foster innovation, enhance cooperation, and drive systemic change in the field of disability inclusion as we aim to contribute to sustainable and inclusive development.

The Zero Project Scale-Up Report is more than a collection of case studies; it is a testament to what is possible when we work together in partnership towards a more inclusive world. We invite all stakeholders to join us in supporting these 24 innovators and in making a lasting impact on the lives of persons with disabilities worldwide.

Executive Summary

Overview

All 24 scale-up organizations analysed

Methodology

Identifying the scale-up organizations and the eight scaling strategies

Background

Essl Foundation, Zero Project, and its Scaling Solutions Programme

Strategies

Working with businesses, civil society and the public sector

Overview: All 24 scale-up organizations

SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS, THEMES, AND DOMESTIC COUNTRIES A GLANCE

These 24 organizations and their innovative solutions have been selected because they have strategies for scaling and growing across country borders.



Amar Seva Sangam (India):
App-based early intervention



Be My Eyes (United States):
Community for the blind



Benetech/Bookshare
(U.S.): eBook library



Capito (Germany): Training
as museum guides



DeafTawk (Pakistan):
Sign language service



Egalité (Brazil):
Recruitment platform



Enable Vaani (India): Mobile
phone-based text service



Hable One (Netherlands):
Smart device for the blind



Incluyeme.com
(Argentina): Job portal



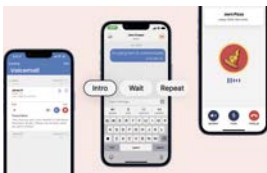
Jaipur Foot BMVSS (India):
Prosthetics



Karuna (Nepal): Training
governments in inclusion



Livox (Brazil): Communica-
tion for non-verbal children



Nagish (United States):
Audio-to-text in real-time



NLR (Indonesia): Sex
education for youth



Reach & Match (Australia):
Tactile, inclusive play kit



RET Americas (Panama):
Disaster preparedness



RIT/WAY Programme
(U.S.): Sign language library



SignLab (Norway): Teach-
ing sign language



Special Olympics (Pana-
ma): inclusive sports teams



Specialisterne (Denmark):
Employment



Tai Tanzania: Digital story-
telling for youth



TOM Global (U.S., Israel): Free
sharing of Assistive Tech



Ugani (Belgium):
Prosthetics



White Hands Chorus (Ja-
pan): Inclusive youth choir

About the Essl Foundation, the Zero Project, and the Scaling Solutions Programme

THE BACKGROUND OF THIS RESEARCH REPORT

This report is based on the extensive research of the Zero Project on innovative solutions – what they are, how they work, and what defines them. The Scaling Solutions Programme has worked to identify scalable innovations since 2018.

About the Essl Foundation and the Zero Project

The Essl Foundation, established in 2008, is an Austrian charitable foundation focused on scientific research and charitable giving. It initiated the Zero Project in 2011 to identify, curate, and disseminate inclusive solutions, as encouraged by Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Zero Project's mission is to work towards a world with zero barriers, supporting the implementation of the CRPD by finding and sharing solutions that improve the lives and legal rights of persons with disabilities. The project operates globally, fostering partnerships and collaborations to amplify the impact of the innovative solutions it identifies.

After seven years of engaging with scalable innovations, the Zero Project recognized the need to analyse and document successful scaling strategies.

The Zero Project methodology and its annual research cycle

The Zero Project uses a robust methodology to identify and promote innovative solutions that improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Since 2013 the Zero Project has developed an evaluation and selection framework that revolves around three core criteria: innovation, impact, and scalability. This methodology is integral to the selection process of the Zero Project Awardees.

Innovation is the cornerstone of the Zero Project's approach. Solutions must demonstrate novel and effective ways to remove barriers within

the project's thematic focus areas, which include the original four areas of Employment, Accessibility, Independent Living/Political Participation, and Education (which are researched based on a four-year-cycle), as well as ICT (which is researched every year) and Crisis Response (which was added as a main research topic for the first time in 2025). The research process considers the local context, geographies, and specific groups of beneficiaries, ensuring that the selected solutions are not only innovative but also contextually relevant.

Impact is measured by the tangible benefits a solution provides, such as the number of beneficiaries, service usage, growth rate, or improvements in public services. The Zero Project only considers solutions that have been deployed and have demonstrated impact, excluding projects or products still in the concept stage.

Scalability is crucial for expanding the reach of successful innovations. The Zero Project reviews nominations for their potential to replicate and expand to new geographies. Since 2013 the Zero Project has selected 960 solutions from all around the world, showcasing scalability through diverse methods such as licensing cooperation, open-source sharing, policy replication, and the expansion of inclusive start-up solutions to new countries.

The Zero Project Network

The methodology is based on the contributions of a global network of experts with and without disabilities from various sectors, contributing their expertise to refine and enhance the selection process. Every year more than 4,000 persons engage with the Zero Project in various ways, including as nominators, peer-reviewers, contributors to publications, and presenters or participants at the annual Zero Project Conference in Vienna and its partner conferences in Ibero-America, India, and the Asia-Pacific.



The annual Zero Project Conference (photo from the Zero Project Conference in March 2025) is the “manifestation” of the whole Zero Project community and research.

By actively sharing solutions through the Zero Project Conference and publications, and partnering with strategic organizations, the Zero Project amplifies the impact of the Awardees’ solutions. This comprehensive approach ensures that innovative practices and policies are not only recognized but also widely disseminated.

Zero Project Scaling Solutions

The Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme, originally launched as the Zero Project Impact Transfer in 2018, has evolved into a global initiative aimed at transferring and advancing innovative solutions for disability inclusion across borders. This programme was initiated by the Essl Foundation in collaboration with Ashoka, a network of leading social entrepreneurs, and Fundación Descúbreme, a Chile-based non-profit organization. Over the years it has supported more than 73 innovations from 37 countries, demonstrating its commitment to fostering global replication of impactful solutions.

The programme’s transformation into the Zero Project Scaling Solutions in 2023 marked a significant shift in its approach, focusing on strengthening future impact through strategic partnerships. The consortium now includes the Essl Foundation, Fundación Descúbreme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Atos SE, and EnAble India, with the Norwegian organization Inclusive Creation as its implementation partner. These partners bring vast networks and expertise, serving as catalysts to scale selected innovations worldwide.

The Scaling Solutions Programme operates through a structured cycle, whereby partners champion selected innovators, known as Scaling Solutions Fellows. These fellows receive tailored strategies and resources to navigate the complex process of scaling their innovations to new countries and regions. Key components include impact measurement, personal advisors, and networking opportunities at events such as the Zero Project Conference and regional conferences.

The programme’s success is evident in the rapid replication of innovations, with a third of all participants achieving replication within two years.

From Scaling Solutions to this report

After seven years of engaging with scalable innovations, the Zero Project recognized the need to analyse and document successful scaling strategies. This report aims to provide insight into how these solutions can be effectively transferred across borders, contributing to the global disability inclusion ecosystem. It serves as a comprehensive guide for stakeholders interested in replicating successful models in their own contexts, thereby advancing the mission of a world with zero barriers.

We are grateful that one of the partners of the Scaling Solution programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), is supporting this report and its first presentation at the Global Disability Summit in Berlin, 2-3 April 2025; and we are also grateful to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for its generous funding of this report.

Identifying leaders and strategies

THE METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

The Zero Project research team used a three-step-process to identify 24 leaders in scaling up and eight strategies that are used by all of them.

Preselection of Zero Project Awardees

In June 2024 a selected group of 50 past Zero Project Awardees were asked to complete a questionnaire to update the status of their projects and to explain their current scaling strategies. The survey focused on those Awardees with an international growth strategy, and asked for their mission, motivations, methods, and partnerships. In another section of the questionnaire they were asked about their plans for the future, about desired types of partners, and the resources required for scaling their project.

Respondents were also asked to describe their value proposition to potential partners, their strengths, and the expected costs and income models. Finally, they were asked to categorize their scaling model according to 12 predefined options, including licensing partnerships, training-based replication, open-source knowledge sharing, government collaboration, digital service subscriptions, and campaign-based approaches.

Candidate evaluation and analysis

The completed questionnaires were evaluated and analysed. The Zero Project research team started by using criteria common for analysing for-profit enterprises, derived from relevant literature.

These criteria covered several dimensions that were also considered relevant for successful expansion, such as the enterprise's existing capacities, legal structure, and current funding.

Another important factor was an understanding about the criteria that potential partners have to meet.

Selection of 24 organizations

Ultimately, 24 scale-up organizations were selected and contacted again to get an accurate understanding of their scaling methodology. For this purpose, a descriptive analysis was done by the research team and sent to the each of the 24 organizations, asking for comments, additions, and more background.

As some scale-up organizations have more than one strategy, it was important to determine which strategy is preferred and under what conditions other options are also used or considered.

Definition of eight strategies

For the second part of the evaluation, the scaling methodologies of all 24 scale-up organizations were compared to understand similarities and differences related to key elements of their strategy: how scaling is financed, who is involved in implementation and to what extent, etc.

Finally, eight strategies were identified as being particularly relevant for the scaling of these 24 Scale-Up Champions. They have clear similarities within each strategy and are distinctively different to the others.

The definition of those eight strategies also reflects the diversity of challenges and solutions related not only to the implementation of successful strategies but of never deviating from the mission they all have in common: the inclusion of as many persons with disabilities as possible.













THE THREE STEPS HOW THE 24 SCALE-UP ORGANIZATIONS WERE FOUND

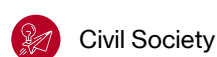
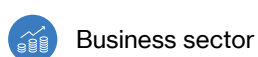
1. The research team created a shortlist of innovative solutions (mostly former Awardees) that also have a clear strategy of scaling. It only looked at start-ups, NGOs, or small companies that had developed outstanding innovative solutions (and did not look at all other types of innovative solutions from the full Zero Project scope)
2. Questionnaires were sent to all of them asking for updates and clarifications of their strategies, and the 24 with the most compelling strategies and tangible impact were selected.
3. The research team tried to get a thorough understanding of methods used for scaling by the scale-up organizations, and identified eight 'Scaling Strategies' that work in international scaling.

Eight strategies for successful scaling

WORKING WITH BUSINESSES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Zero Project identified eight successful strategies for this report, with some of the scale-up organizations also using more than one of them at the same time. Most important is the type of sustainable income that is generated.

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <u>Strategy 1</u> | Establishing one's own organization in the target country Establishing a physical presence to directly manage/control operations and services, including franchise. Used for complex service providing. |  |
| <u>Strategy 2</u> | Engaged licensing partnership for quality ICT-based services Partnering with local entities to provide high-quality ICT services through licensing agreements. |  |
| <u>Strategy 3</u> | Sales and distribution contracts for ready-made products Forming contracts for the sale and distribution of pre-manufactured products. |  |
| <u>Strategy 4</u> | ICT-based services for business and private users Developing solutions that appeal to both business and individual users, enhancing utility and market reach, and using business to cross-finance. |   |
| <u>Strategy 5</u> | Low-cost licensing of trainings and services to social service providers An NGO having developed an innovative service, now offering affordable licensing options for training and teaching to peers in other countries. |  |
| <u>Strategy 6</u> | Using the resources of universities and the education system Collaborating with educational institutions to leverage their resources and expertise. |   |
| <u>Strategy 7</u> | Using the resources of arts institutions and museums Engaging with arts institutions to provide solutions that support artistic and cultural initiatives. |   |
| <u>Strategy 8</u> | Prestigious partnerships built on grant and government funding Forming high-profile partnerships that utilize government funding and/or grants from philanthropists or businesses to enhance project viability and impact. |   |



Analysis of the scale-up organizations

ANALYSIS BY THEME, TARGET GROUP, COUNTRY, STAGE, PARTNER, AND STRATEGY

A summary page of important factors defining the scaling strategy of each of the 24 scale-up organizations, based on Zero Project research and estimates.

| Scaling strategies used | Scale-up organization* | Theme | Target group | Country of origin | Scaling into: | Stage of scaling | Who is cooperating with whom? |
|---|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| 1 (own organization/franchising) | Specialis-terne (2025) | Employment | Persons on the autism spectrum | Denmark | global | 6 (sustainable scaling) | Social business with social business |
| 1 (own organization/franchising) | Ugani (2024) | Prosthetics | Amputees | Belgium | global | 5 (scaling) | Social business with social business/grant funded |
| 2 (licensing ICT platform) | DeafTawk (2022) | Communication | Deaf/Hard of hearing | Pakistan | Asia, Denmark, United States | 5 (scaling) | Start-up with large company (telecom) and DPOs of the deaf |
| 2 (licensing ICT platform) | Egalité (2022) | Job recruitment | Everyone with a disability | Brazil | Spanish-, Portuguese-, and English-speaking regions | 5 (scaling) | Start-up with NGOs, business networks, and governments |
| 2 (licensing ICT platform) | Livox (2020) | Education | Non-verbal persons | Brazil | Global, focus on Spanish-speaking regions | 5 (scaling) | Start-up with large distributors in education or healthcare |
| 3 (sales and distribution partnerships) | Hable One (2024) | Communication | Blind/Visual impairment | Netherlands | Global | 5 (scaling) | Start-up with local distributors of assistive technologies |
| 3 (sales and distribution partnerships) | Reach & Match (2024) | Education | Blind/Visual impairment and Multiple | Australia | Eight countries in Europe, Asia, and the United States | 4 (transition to scale) | Social business with all types of organizations |
| 4 (ICT services for business and private) | Be My Eyes (2022) | Community-based support | Blind/Visual impairment | United States | Global | 6 (sustainable scaling) | Social business with companies and governments |
| 4 (ICT services for business and private) | Incluyeme.com (2021) | Job recruitment | Everyone with a disability | Argentina | Latin America | 5 (scaling) | Social business with all types of organizations |
| 4 (ICT services for business and private) | Nagish (2024) | Translation | Deaf/Hard of hearing | United States | Canada, Israel | 5 (scaling) | Start-up with large company (telecom, healthcare, etc.) |
| 4 (ICT services for business and private) | SignLab – Toleio (2021) | Education | Sign language users | Norway | global | 5 (scaling) | Social business with local sign language organizations |
| 4 (ICT services for business and private) | Tai Tanzania (2024) | Education/Awareness | All children with disabilities | Tanzania | Kenya, Ghana | 5 (scaling) | NGO with large organizations (media, training, education) |

* In brackets: Year of receiving the Zero Project Award

| Scaling strategies used | Scale-up organization* | Theme | Target group | Country of origin | Scaling into: | Stage of scaling | Who is cooperating with whom? |
|---|--|--|---|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| 5 (low-cost licensing) | Amar Seva Sangam (2020, 2023) | Early childhood intervention | Children in rural areas | India | Ethiopia, South and Southeast Asia | 4 (transition to scale) | NGO with larger NGO |
| 5 (low-cost licensing) | Enable India/ Enable Vaani (2018, 2022) | Communication, community-based support | Under-served communities | India | Ethiopia, India | 5 (scaling) | NGO with NGOs, companies, and technology providers |
| 5 (low-cost licensing) | Jaipur Foot BMVSS (2018) | Prosthetics | Amputees | India | 43 countries, 33 branches in India | 5 (scaling) | NGOs with NGOs |
| 5 (low-cost licensing) | NLR – My Body is Mine (2023) | Education/Awareness | All children with disabilities | Indonesia | Brazil, India, and other countries | 4 (transition to scale) | NGO with NGOs |
| 5 (low-cost licensing) | RIT – WAY Programme (2022) | Education, entertainment | Sign language users | United States | Fiji, Indonesia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines | 4 (transition to scale) | Technology institute with DPOs, NGOs, government agencies, and educational institutions |
| 6 (using university and education sector resources) | Benetech – Bookshare (2020, 2022) | Education | Everyone with a reading barrier | United States | 90 countries | 6 (sustainable scaling) | NGO with NGOs, governments, schools, and businesses |
| 6 (using university and education sector resources) | TOM Global (2025) | Collaboration network for innovative solutions | Everyone with a disability | United States, Israel | 35 countries, 100 university campuses | 5 (scaling) | NGO with universities, rehabilitation centres, makerspaces, and municipalities |
| 7 (using funding mechanisms of arts institutions) | Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2020) | Employment in museums | Persons with intellectual disabilities | Germany | Austria, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Sweden | 4 (transition to scale) | Museum with museum |
| 7 (using funding mechanisms of arts institutions) | White Hands Chorus NIPPON (2024) | Choir and music | All children with disabilities | Japan | Japan, Germany | 4 (transition to scale) | Choir with theatres, ministries of education, schools, and conservatories |
| 8 (large-scale partnerships with the public sector/philanthropists) | Karuna Foundation (2017, 2018, 2023) | Community-based support | Everyone with a disability | Nepal, Netherlands | Bangladesh, DR of Congo, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania | 5 (scaling) | Foundation with governments and international funding partners |
| 8 (large-scale partnerships with the public sector/philanthropists) | RET Americas (2020) | Education, disaster preparedness | All children with disabilities | Panama | 35 countries in Latin America | 5 (scaling) | International NGO with regional networks |
| 8 (large-scale partnerships with the public sector/philanthropists) | Special Olympics Latin Am. – Escuelas Unificadas (2024) | Sports in schools | Children with intellectual disabilities | Panama | Many countries in Latin America | 5 (scaling) | International NGO with governments and the education sector |

What is needed to understand the scaling of innovative solutions

RESEARCH BACKGROUND ON THE ESSENTIALS OF THE SCALING PROCESS

In this report a full chapter is dedicated to a thorough analysis of the scaling process: Its definition and forms, its prerequisites, its stages and forms of partnerships required, its common pitfalls, and specifics related to accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The Zero Project has a 12-year track record of intense and consistent research on innovative solutions supporting the CRPD and improving the lives and rights of persons with disabilities. Those innovative solutions span diverse forms such as products, services, regulations, and programmes – originating from all social sectors, including civil society, public institutions, and private businesses, with a special importance of such ‘hybrid sectors’ as the education system, universities, and the arts.

The chapter on “Innovating and scaling innovations” explains the underlying principles of how the Zero Project evaluates innovative solutions, and adds new research on how some of them are successfully scaling them across country borders.

The two main agents in international scaling are identified as the scale-up organization and the local partner.

- **Definitions of Innovation and Scaling:** The term ‘scaling’ refers broadly to the growth or replication of these innovations, involving either direct expansion or partnership-based models such as franchising, licensing, or informal knowledge sharing.
- **The Six Stages in scaling:** Effective scaling follows a progression through six distinct stages, but the Zero Project covers only stages 3 to 6:
 3. Proof of concept
 4. Transition to scale
 5. Scaling
 6. Sustainable scaling
- **Definition of a scalable solution:** Only a few innovative solutions can be scaled. The transition from local success to international adaptation frequently encounters regulatory, cultural, and financial challenges, requiring meticulous planning and adaptation. Sustainable funding is identified as a pivotal factor, achievable through a limited number of pathways, including market-driven revenues, governmental funding mechanisms, sustained philanthropic support, or low-cost open-source dissemination.
- **Themes and sectors of accessibility and inclusion:** The scale-up organizations work in very different themes. Successful scaling often relies on leveraging technology, especially ICT solutions due to their inherent cost-efficiency and adaptability. However, non-tech innovations also scale effectively through structured replication models, such as licensing, despite longer implementation timelines.
- The challenges of entrepreneurship in accessibility and inclusion.
- **The ultimate goal of a scaling strategy:** Quality, equality, and accountability are essential for successful scaling. Innovations must consistently maintain high standards, equitable access, and transparency to ensure broad acceptance and effectiveness. Stakeholders must navigate the complexities associated with maintaining these principles throughout the whole chain of services that are provided.
- The importance of the public sector, playing a pivotal role and significantly influencing scalability through licensing, regulatory frameworks, subsidies, and procurement policies.
- **The value chain in scaling internationally:** The main agents in international scaling are identified as: (1) the scale-up organization, and (2) the local partner, which may or may not be the provider of the services to persons with disabilities.
- Most importantly, successful scaling strategies have to ensure active participation and partnership with Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and target communities.
- **Common blunders, failures, and errors:** Common pitfalls need to be addressed.

Innovating and scaling innovations

Scaling

The difference to innovating, and the different types of scaling

Scalability

Why some innovations can be scaled and others not

Entrepreneurship

The importance and challenges of entrepreneurs in accessibility and inclusion

Public sector

The importance of governments, regulations, standardization, etc.

Expert comments

Bob Ludke, Anthony Giannoumis, Gidi Grinstein, and Georg Schön

Stages in scaling

From proof-of-concept and transition-to-scale to sustainable scaling

Themes

ICT-based and other solutions that are scaled in practice

Goals of scaling

Solutions that are affordable, available, accessible, equitable, and more

Value chain

From scale-up organizations to local partners to end-users with a disability

Pitfalls

Reasons why a majority of innovations fail in the end

About innovations and the different methods to support their growth

DEFINITIONS OF INNOVATION AND SCALING

Scaling is a broad term referring to how innovations that started small, can grow, replicate, or otherwise become available to many people. In this part, the various ways that innovations can scale-up are explained.

Talking about innovation and scaling

Innovation and scaling are often perceived as abstract concepts. When discussing innovation and its scalability, it might seem like there are clear, self-explanatory concepts behind those terms. However, both terms are quite flexible, encompassing very different processes in real life. Using these terms without questioning can lead to terribly misled decisions.

Who is the innovator?

Innovations, as understood by the Zero Project, can be products, services, laws and regulations, funding schemes, projects, and programmes. They can be driven by ICT (technology) or not. They can be developed by civil society, by the business sector, or also the public sector, including 'hybrid sectors' such as universities.

The broadness of options for scaling

Scaling can mean very different things. Used without qualifications, scaling seems to imply a linear, organic, but also fast growth of an organization or of the number of users of its products, services, programmes, etc. But scaling can also mean the replication of an innovation by someone else, who may or may not be related to the innovator, or even diffusion without a dedicated organizer behind it.

The Scale-Up Organization and Local Partners

In one-to-one (or also one-to-many) partnerships for scaling, the Zero Project calls the original innovating organization the "Scale-Up Organization" and their partner the "Local Partners." The relationship between these two can be very tight, and it can legally be even the same entity or a subsidiary in the target country (region). It can come in a variety of partnerships, such as a franchise contract, a licensing contract, sales or distribution contract, or even a non-formal agreement simply based on training and sharing.

These types of scaling are the backbone for the Zero Project in this report. In contrast, the following types of scaling also exist (and have been covered by the broad Zero Project Research for many years), but are not the focus of this report.

Scaling within multinational companies and international NGOs

Within large organizations the scaling of innovations happens all the time, for example, by adding new features to existing products and services. Large international NGOs 'cross-fertilize' all the time by understanding what works well in country A and then trying to implement it in country B. Some businesses even run innovation departments to groom and share innovations within their organization. Scaling within multinational companies is not part of this report.



Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany) trains persons with disabilities to become museum guides, seeking licensing partnerships with museums and other arts institutions.



Amar Seva Sangam's strategy is to form licensing partnerships with NGOs, governments, and corporations. The NGO from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu is also open to knowledge partnerships, where they share expertise through training and consultations.

The 'Role Model' example

Some outstandingly innovative organizations have decided not to grow by themselves, not to branch out, and not to enter licensing agreements at all. They are successful and want to stay just as they are.

They are, however, willing to share their expertise broadly by inviting interested stakeholders to learn from them. Sharing expertise might even be for free and open source on their website or their YouTube channel.

With this strategy of being the 'Role Model', they strengthen their position as the thematic leader and stay attractive as a partner for scientific research and sponsoring, among many other advantages. Some universities, schools, and dedicated NGOs are using this strategy. These types of sharing are used by some NGOs in this report.

Changing the system

Some innovators have launched organizations or programmes that they never wanted to grow. They serve another purpose, namely, to use as a proof-of-concept ("it really works, it is not just an idea") to influence public policy-making or corporate business strategies.

Their Theory of Change is to showcase that things can be done differently and that a better and/or greater impact can lead to changes in public governance and business strategies. The public sector is encouraged to adapt its models for licensing, regulating, and funding for the pilot

model – and later for all others that will be modelled in the same way.

With proof-of-concepts, the business sector can be encouraged to: (1) adapt its products and services, (2) change its hiring and training procedures, and (3) engage with civil society in a more meaningful way.

Scaling can mean the replication of an innovation by someone else, or even diffusion without a dedicated organizer behind it.

Innovations within the public sector and large NGOs

The public sector (as well as large companies and NGOs) has a variety of innovation means at hand: adapting regulations and funding schemes, adapting their purchasing and procurement policies, their policies with regards to diversity in employment in the public sector itself, or by mandatory quota and requirements for the business sector.

Ex-employees starting their own venture

A common, often overlooked catalyst for the dissemination of innovation is staff and experts leaving their former organizations and starting projects of their own. They use their knowledge and adapt it, scaling again in another form.

WHY MANY INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FACE STRONG RESISTANCE

For an innovative solution to be adapted by persons with disabilities, it must be transparent and explicit about its target group and methodologies. And it must always be planned, initiated, and executed with persons with disabilities involved in all stages. Still, most innovations fail at some point.

Reasons for failing often lie hidden at the outset and only become apparent through communication and collaboration with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and individuals with disabilities themselves.

Scepticism against types of technology

For instance, many persons with hearing impairments often view technologies such as sign language avatars and certain types of hearing aids with scepticism. Similarly, in the domain of web accessibility, some methodologies, such as overlays, are not universally accepted as fully accessible by many user communities.

Inclusive education: A contested terrain

Inclusive education, too, is a contentious issue,

even among persons with disabilities. The concept of inclusive education, that is, of integrating all children into a single classroom regardless of their disabilities, is rooted in a human-rights-based approach. However, not all communities embrace this model, with some advocating for specialized support.

Violating human rights and substituting human interaction

Disregarding the "nothing about us without us" principle jeopardizes innovations, potentially violating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is particularly pertinent in areas related to physical and mental health. DPOs are likely to oppose any innovative solution that treats disability as a disease.

Moreover, some DPOs and advocates are highly critical of technological services that replace human interaction and assistance. They argue that the social model of disabilities, which contrasts with the medical and charity models, cannot be implemented by relying solely on technology

The White Hands Chorus NIPPON has developed a scaling model with clear guidelines and training offered to theatres, education ministries, schools, and conservatories as licensing and operating partners without license fees.



“Ashoka makes disability a priority for its global Venture programme.”

A COMMENTARY BY GEORG SCHÖN, CO-DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS OF ASHOKA

In his commentary, Georg Schön addresses the importance of readiness of stakeholder for replication, the importance of context, and the new strategy of Ashoka to embrace disability across all aspects of its organization.

Ashoka is the largest network of leading social entrepreneurs worldwide, helping them to realize their innovations' full potential by inspiring individuals to become 'changemakers', scaling their impact, and contributing to systems change.

Ashoka's selection criteria ensure that these social innovations have a proven impact model and the potential to achieve systems change. They have been designed, piloted, implemented, and improved by experienced, mission-driven social entrepreneurs.

Successful replication depends on ensuring the 'readiness' of the different actors, the way their roles and contributions are defined, and how their relationships are organized.

What would be more logical than replicating proven social innovations for addressing key societal challenges?

Some 82 per cent of Ashoka Fellows reported in Ashoka's Global Fellows Survey – The Unlonely Planet 2022 that their social innovations have been imitated or replicated in other countries. Although this is good news and shows that social innovations have the potential to be replicated internationally, a closer look often reveals that replication is facing many challenges, such as know-how, organizational development and capacity, and geographical and systems adaptation.

To address the challenges of replication, one needs to understand four contexts:

- the context of the social entrepreneur or innovator who wants to replicate a social innovation;
- the context of the local partners who are supposed to adopt a social innovation;
- the social, cultural, and spatial context in terms of cross-regional or cross-border replication;
- the context of organizational frameworks that

support replication (e.g., INGOs, corporations, state institutions, foundations).

Successful replication depends on ensuring: (i) the 'readiness' of the different actors in all of these contexts, (ii) the way their roles and contributions are defined, and (iii) how their relationships are organized. A thought-through replication strategy is necessary to bring these elements together and to create a replication model that is feasible for everyone involved; and a long-term (financial) commitment is required to put it in place.

At Ashoka we strive to embrace disability across all aspects of the organization. As we continue to learn, we will deepen our understanding and accelerate our actions.

Actions we are already undertaking include:

- We make disability a priority for our global Venture programme. Ashoka searches the world for leading social entrepreneurs through an intensive, human-centred process, selecting them into our global, trust-based fellowship of peers.
- We created the Building an Accessible and Inclusive Ashoka guidelines and trained staff across the global organization to make our operations more accessible and inclusive.

For more information see:
<https://disability.ashoka.org>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Georg Schön is Co-Director of Global Partnerships of Ashoka.

From Proof-of-Concept to Sustainable Scaling

THE SIX STAGES IN SCALING

Understanding the stages of innovation and scaling is crucial to understanding successful strategies. In this section, the importance of stages 3 (proof-of-concept) to 6 (sustainable scaling) is explained.

Looking at the stages of scaling (see infograph), the Zero Project's work focuses on stages 3 to 6:

3. Proof-of-Concept
4. Transition to Scale;
5. Scaling, concentrating on innovative solutions that develop or implement strategies to scale across national borders; and sometimes
6. Sustainable Scaling, based on sustainable funding models. However, at some point solutions drop out of the Zero Project scope, simply because they have to be considered as established and consequently no longer an innovative model.

Stage 4 is crucial for leaving the comfort zone of expertise and entering unknown territories.

This does not imply that one stage is more important than another, but simply that this is a critical feature of the Zero Project's research approach. The selection process for Awardees is conducted by experts with and without disabilities who can only evaluate solutions that already exist and have tangible data on size and development.

Stage 3: Proof-of-concept

At Stage 3, a product, service, programme, etc. really exists and has conducted an early, real-world assessment of its potential: users exist and give constructive feedback.

Innovations usually require less capital and resources than in other stages, although there are exceptions, such as high-tech innovations or solutions that need scientifically tested evidence. Common funding sources in Stage 3 include:

- From close stakeholders (sometimes referred to as 'family, friends, and fools')
- Unpaid personal capacities, including those of the founders and supporters, as well as various experts (technology, business consultancy, marketing and website, administration)

- Small grant-funding programmes by the public sector, philanthropists, or innovation prizes
- In-kind support from companies, such as offering office spaces, networks, opportunities to test, etc.
- If the innovator is a larger organization, funding may come from within
- First revenues from the innovative solution itself

Stage 4: Transition to scale

Innovative solutions must be scaled up after demonstrating 'small-scale' success. This stage requires a strategy for scaling, often involving disruptive changes in the organization, expertise, stakeholders, and management teams. Ignoring Stage 4 can be detrimental, because of its importance.

The role of partnerships

Stage 3 typically does not involve partnerships to scale the innovative solution, though stages do not always follow a strict sequence. An important scaling opportunity or partner may 'retro-influence' the proof of concept, meaning changes in features.

Growth strategy and funding

From Stage 4 onwards, both the scale-up organization and the local partner must maintain liquidity to invest and operate, necessitating sustainable funding. Stage 4 presents specific funding challenges. A long-term funding strategy is crucial for growth, licensing, replication, or training. Balancing short-term and long-term decisions is essential.

Real-world perspectives

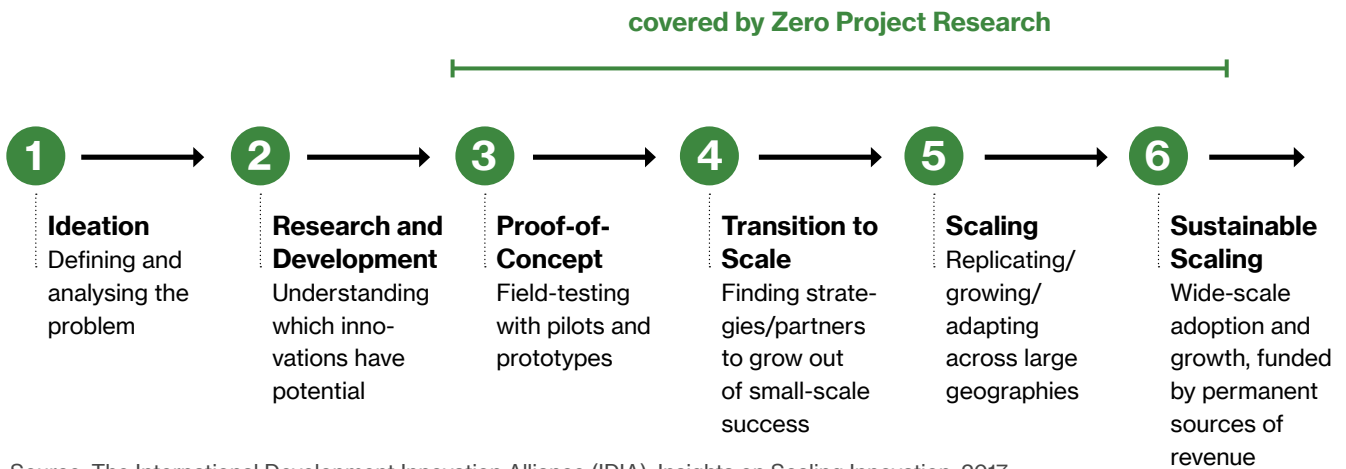
Getting the long-term perspective absolutely right from the beginning is beyond reasonable expectations. It requires understanding markets, competition, and production/distribution costs. Stakeholders must come in at a later stage, despite uncertainties about timing.

Stepping outside the comfort zone

Stage 4 is crucial for leaving the comfort zone of expertise and entering unknown territories.

Scaling Stages

The International Development Innovation Alliance model defines six Scaling Stages, which are used throughout the analysis in this report. The Zero Project research focuses on Stages 3 to 6.



Source: The International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA): Insights on Scaling Innovation, 2017

Substantial external funding must be raised, increasing stakes for all parties involved. Wrong decisions can be costly or endanger the project. Expertise in market and competition, regulations and taxes, licensing and property rights, and international travel is required. A different type of stakeholder becomes relevant: professional funders, lawyers, business consultants, taxation experts, university researchers, social media pros, sector experts, and civil servants. Managing diverse teams becomes an important skill.

Planning for diversification

Scaling success often leads to diversification opportunities, reaching sustainability sooner or adapting services/products to user needs.

Managing a diverse team and partners

Social innovators are usually empathetic, creative, and visionary, but they need to collaborate with efficiency experts, technology specialists, and experienced networkers. Managing diversity within the team becomes crucial.

Stage 5: Scaling

Sometimes more than one funding round is needed in Stage 5 as scaling and expansion progress. Common for Stage 5 funding is a focus on revenue streams, which should grow stronger than expenses over three to five years, with a forecast to reach a break-even point within that period. This may mean accessing additional funding opportunities, in the case of scaling non-profits, and grant-funding or public innovation funding.

On the side of the scaling partner, funding challenges at Stage 5 are similar but not identical

when considering partnering with a scale-up organization. When a new organization must be founded, a franchise or licensing agreement must be made, often requiring an initial investment, which is either:

- Requested by the organization to contribute to their cost for scaling up, or
- Costs to establish an organization (including staff, technology, etc.) before revenue streams pick up.

Stage 6: Sustainable Scaling

By Stage 6, the innovative solution has not only solidified its scaling strategy but has also secured a steady income stream that supports both its core operations and its ongoing expansion efforts. At some point then, these organizations or projects are no longer viewed as innovative solutions since they have become well-established and comparable to other existing solutions.

THE LESSONS FROM SCALING MCDONALD'S

Ray Kroc, often credited as McDonald's founder, leveraged his expertise in funding, real estate, and lease contracts to develop a franchising strategy. This strategy enabled McDonald's to scale indefinitely. Kroc's story highlights the different expertise required for scaling versus innovation, which is often overlooked by stakeholders, leading to failed innovations despite their superiority. Conflicts between Kroc and the McDonald brothers underscore the challenges in transitioning from innovation to scaling.

What makes a good innovation also a scalable innovation

DEFINING SCALABILITY

A scalable solution is one that can expand efficiently and effectively. It is essential to understand what can be scaled and why, as well as the factors that may limit or prohibit scaling.

The prevalence of ICT-based solutions

Technologies such as web services and apps, once piloted, can be utilized by an almost infinite number of users with minimal additional costs. When successful, these solutions can be easily transformed into viable business cases, generating profits as soon as user revenues surpass fixed costs, with negligible variable costs.

Contrasting with traditional dissemination methods

In stark contrast, other forms of disseminating innovative solutions, such as devices, require production and distribution. Social services, ranging from vocational training to caretaking, incur high staff costs, and variable costs increase substantially with the number of users.

Scaling social innovations with technology

There are opportunities for social innovations to scale easily, especially when integrated with technology. Train-the-trainer models using online curricula can scale quickly and cost-effectively. Webinars and online training sessions allow a single trainer to reach a large audience.

International scaling of ICT solutions

ICT solutions can be adapted for use in other countries with relative ease, as changing languages or country maps is simpler than most in-person interactions. However, necessary adaptations resulting from different legal or tax regulations as well as cultural differences can be challenging.

Non-tech and low-tech innovations

There are also scaling models that do not rely on applied technologies. Innovative training programmes, advocacy tools, housing models, and rural service provision can use licensing or franchising models to scale across borders, provided the advantages are similar and necessary adaptations can be made. However, this process usually takes significantly longer. Developing and

promoting a service app on social media may take a few months, whereas replicating a social business model in another country can take three to seven years.

Facilitating easier scaling

Solutions can be scaled more easily if legal entry barriers are low, initial investments are small, and the service or programme is affordable and readily available. Sharing training courses online for free and open source is a crucial method.

Overcoming existing solutions and vested interests

Successful scaling often involves overcoming existing solutions and vested interests. Innovative solutions typically offer clear advantages, such as increased inclusivity, accessibility, ease of use, higher quality, and affordability. However, they often aim to replace existing products, services, and programmes. While business strategists are aware of entering new markets, social innovators, tech start-ups, and their investors may not be.

Challenges from existing stakeholders

Existing competitors may work against innovative solutions, even before their launch. They might influence stakeholders to view the new solution as a risk or threat and persuade social service providers or wholesalers to avoid it.

Frightening off the public sector

Incumbents often try to deter public sector stakeholders, who are crucial for the success or failure of scaling an innovation. In many countries, users of disability-related services do not pay the full price and sometimes receive them for free. Getting an innovative product into the same benefit category as incumbents is crucial. However, established solutions may block new competitors, and the public sector 'gatekeepers' may resist adapting rules to new services and products, prioritizing high quality standards, risk avoidance, and fiscal responsibility.



Be My Eyes uses an app to connect blind and partially sighted users with sighted volunteers. It has grown to 750,000 users and 8 million volunteers in just ten years. The service is free to users and is funded by licensing partners who offer the service to their customers and employees. These licensing partners are primarily well-known multinational companies that accelerate growth through their international presence and brand recognition.

“Scale-Ups and Moonshots!”

A COMMENTARY BY GIDI GRINSTEIN, FOUNDER OF TOM GLOBAL

Gidi Grinstein on bold “moonshot thinking,” scarcity and economic models, the importance of “makers,” and the basic unit of any scale-up organization.

A “scale-up” is defined by Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, as a “world-changing company that touches millions or even billions of lives.” Hoffman observes that such vision requires “hypergrowth . . . by creating network effects . . . [that emanate from] . . . extreme, unwieldy, risky, inefficient, do-or-die approach.” In other words, scale-ups are ventures whose rationale emerges only when they reach a critical scale. Hence, a strategy of scaling that seeks exponential growth is essential for scale-ups. In July 2014, I led the founding of Tikkun Olam Makers, better known as TOM, which is a scale-up. In this article I will share a few lessons about the underlying approach.

Affordable and accessible for anyone anywhere

My work in the social field in Israel brought me in contact with dire poverty, which was often caused or compounded by severe physical or mental disability. For example, we met a wheelchair-bound man who was confined to his non-accessible apartment. In my travels, I saw huge gaps between developed and developing nations, as well as between rich and poor neighbourhoods and urban and rural areas.

Such dire needs mobilize good people to do good things. I admire each and every one of them. But I also observed some systemic flaws: Most ventures were confined to a specific geography; addressed only ‘one issue’, such as deafness or

blindness; or ‘one space’, such as employment, sports, or music. Further, most had only partially developed solutions. Only a handful of initiatives offered a systemic approach, and a miniscule number were truly global in their outlook.

Against this backdrop, our team and I sought to launch a venture that was systemic and global. If we allow for the creation of 2,500 solutions that are distributed in 10,000 locations, we could help millions. Our motto was captured in four key words: Affordable, Accessible for Anyone Anywhere. We realized that a breakthrough venture called for breakthrough thinking.

Moonshot thinking and disability inclusion

On 21 July 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first human to step onto the moon. In his words, it was “one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” This breakthrough in space exploration had an unintended legacy, which is known as “moonshot thinking.” Eight years earlier, in May 1961, President John F. Kennedy challenged NASA to put astronauts on the moon by the end of that decade. Yet at the time, landing on the moon was far beyond existing capabilities and required many inventions, such as water purification systems, cordless devices, and joysticks.

Over the years, moonshot thinking became a concept that describes the bold outlook that is required for game-changing ventures. Google describes moonshots as projects that “address a huge problem, propose radical solutions, and use breakthrough technology” that is “10x,” namely, ten times better than what already exists. The Techtargget website defines moonshots as “ambitious, exploratory, and ground-breaking projects undertaken without any expectation of near-term profitability or benefit and . . . without a full investigation of potential risks and benefits.” Indeed, moonshot thinking continues to inspire many today to lead world-changing ventures.

As hundreds of millions of people live with significant disabilities, moonshot thinking should be prevalent in the field of disability inclusion. But in reality, there are few moonshot ventures in

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gidi Grinstein is Founder and President of the Reut Group and TOM. He is the author of the book *Flexigidity: The Secret of Jewish Adaptability*.

The Toddler Mobility Trainer allows toddlers with disabilities to move independently. Its design can be downloaded for free from the TOM website to be assembled by anyone anywhere.



that space because vulnerable populations lack political clout and rarely represent an attractive business opportunity.

Our team and I had these notions in mind when we launched TOM in July 2014. The “crazy” goal of helping 250 million people forced us to “think big” and create a bold strategy in which every element was designed to scale. We resisted the urge to rush to build solutions and committed to a gruelling intellectual effort of reverse-engineering our vision. In hindsight, we succeeded in the sense that our approach has barely changed since TOM's inception in 2012–2014.

Economic model of abundance and scarcity

The founding observation of TOM was that many people who live with disabilities live in scarcity because they face challenges that are too specific and rare. At the same time, there is often great abundance around them: talented engineers who are willing to develop solutions, and unused machines, such as 3D printers, that could manufacture them. Furthermore, universities and schools wanted to do much more for disability inclusion and had the human capital and facilities to do so.

Hence, we could envision an ‘economic model’ where abundance addresses scarcity and where demand for and supply of solutions are cleared on a platform that supports such ‘exchange’. To better understand TOM's approach, think about Airbnb: it is one of the largest hospitality entities in the world without owning a single room. Its platform allows millions of renters and rentees to do business.

The basic unit of a scale-up

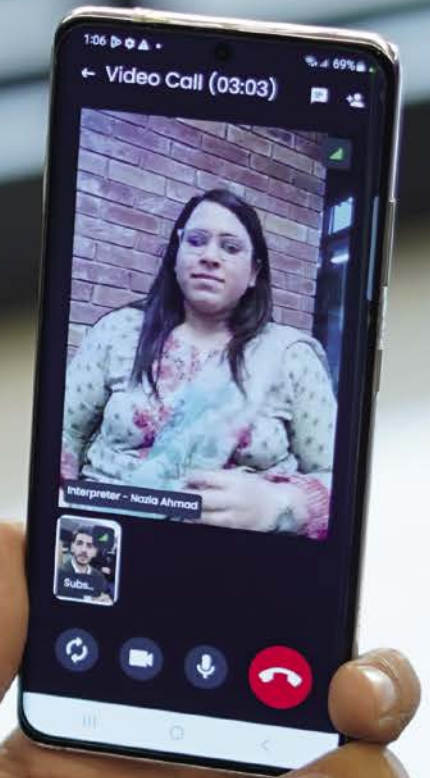
Every scale-up has a ‘basic unit’, which is replicated many times to achieve scale. For TOM, that basic unit is the TOM Team. Each team has a ‘need-knower’, who is a person with disability, their caregiver, or family who can share an intimate understanding of a challenge by participating in the design of the solution. A TOM Team also includes ‘makers’ who are committed to help the need-knower to solve his or her specific challenge. To begin, everyone agrees to ‘deposit’ their creation in the public domain, so it becomes an open-source solution for others to use.

Over the past decade we have improved the working of TOM Teams. We designed a TOM Process that divides product development into five biteable phases. We created a TOM Playbook with detailed guidelines on how to run TOM Teams and how to organize them within communities. We also built a web-platform to support them, and much more. To date, hundreds of TOM Teams in some 220 locations in 36 countries have contributed their creations.

Deceptively small

TOM aims to help millions of people, but to date we have delivered only thousands of solutions, primarily in Israel and the United States. This gap may seem insurmountable. But Peter Diamandis, best known as the founder and chairman of the XPRIZE Foundation, teaches that exponential projects are initially “deceptively small.” Indeed, TOM's current size represents the tip of the iceberg of its potential. Yet with critical building blocks already in place, becoming a scale-up is within reach.

DeafTawk's AI-driven technology, capable of translating text and speech into sign language with 98 percent accuracy, is set to launch for business-to-business (B2B) customers. Currently, the AI supports American, Pakistani, and Chinese Sign Language. Deaf-Tawk seeks partnerships with organizations that have national reach and technological capabilities, such as mobile network operators (MNOs) and DPOs of the deaf.



The themes of the Zero Project

HOW ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IS ANALYSED BY THE ZERO PROJECT

The Zero Project organizes its research into theme, subtopics, and solution clusters. This structure is based on 12 years of annual research. The organization remains largely unchanged, with minor adjustments each year. Crisis response was introduced as a new research topic in 2025.

Employment

- Entrepreneurship and self-employment
- Internships
- Matchmaking
- Microfinancing
- Open labour market
- Personnel leasing models
- Supported employment
- Transforming sheltered workshops
- Workplace adaptation

Accessibility

- Accessibility-related training
- Arts and entertainmen
- Audits, standards, manuals, toolboxes
- Built environment
- Health
- Infrastructure and transport
- Orientation support
- Products and services
- Subtitles and captioning
- Tourism

The Zero Project has defined themes of its research, which also defines the nomination and selection process.

Independent Living and Political Participation

- Early childhood intervention
- Electoral procedures
- Legal and social protection
- Personal assistance and personal budget
- Political/societal participation
- Right to vote
- Self-employment & microfinance
- Self-representation
- Supported decision-making

Education

- Additional accessible learning materials
- Anti-bullying/Violence
- Changing/Adding curricula
- Early childhood

- Empowering schools
- Formal education
- Inclusive school models
- Individual school models
- Lifelong learning
- Non-formal education
- Non-formal teaching/Training method
- Special skills trained
- Training parents
- Training professionals
- Training teachers
- University
- Vocational education and training

ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

- 3D printing
- Artificial Intelligence/machine learning/Big Data
- Assistive technologies
- Cloud-based solution
- Community and knowledge platform
- Computer steering technologies
- Devices developed
- Digital library
- Digital skills
- Gaming solutions
- Internet of Things
- Mobile services and smartphone apps
- Orientation systems
- Other conversation tools
- Robotics and automated machinery
- Social media
- Text to speech, speech to text
- Translation tools (e.g., Easy Language, Sign Language)

Crisis Response

- Accident and evacuation
- Building support chains
- Climate change induced
- Crisis intervention training
- Crisis prevention
- Natural catastrophes
- Refugee and displaced persons
- War and violence

Entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and copy entrepreneurs

THE CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Innovation is the lifeblood of this report, driven by entrepreneurship or at least an entrepreneurial spirit. This aligns with the Zero Project's circular logic, focusing on scaling up start-ups or projects from smaller NGOs and companies.

The essence of entrepreneurship doesn't require deep analysis here, given the extensive literature available. In this context, it combines leadership, inspiration, efficiency, and smartness, always with the drive to get things done, no matter the obstacles.

Social entrepreneurs face the same challenges as traditional entrepreneurs, with additional hurdles. Entrepreneurs with disabilities are best characterized by resilience and lived experience.

Social entrepreneurs

This report highlights the prevalence of social entrepreneurs, a term popularized by Bill Drayton and Ashoka. These individuals possess entrepreneurial skills, but work towards social, moral, or environmental causes, developing unique solutions.

Social entrepreneurs face the same challenges as traditional entrepreneurs, with additional hurdles. They often run social businesses or NGOs, which are not designed to build assets, thus making funding more difficult. Without substantial assets to back loans or future profits, securing funding is a significant challenge. Additionally, selling or transferring the organization is more complex.

Social entrepreneurs are often visionaries and charismatic leaders, which drives their success. People enjoy working with them, but this can create long-term tensions. They may struggle to build strong leadership teams and often ignore external advice.

The local partner as a copy entrepreneur

Scaling up and partnering with a local partner, who is also an entrepreneur and strong leader, can create tension. The local partner may not see

themselves as a mere 'copycat' but as a full-fledged entrepreneur, leading to potential conflicts.

Engineers and marketers

A common divide exists in many companies between 'engineers', who master technologies and product construction, and 'marketers', who shape products and services for users and beneficiaries. This divide can deepen in social businesses, where earnings are just part of the mission. These organizations primarily aim to serve people, society, or the environment.

What is our joint mission?

This divide can lead to varied interpretations of the organization's strategy. Should services and products be made lean, scalable, and often digital to reach as many users as possible? Or should they stay true to the original mission, working with intrinsically motivated staff and keeping services personal for the sake of growth? Should they seize opportunities to work with large companies for a boost, even if it waters down the mission? Should they stick to the original mission and product, or diversify with new products, services, and customers?

Scaling with them all

These potential fractures and fissures can aggregate during cross-country scaling. Managing different partners, personalities, missions, and frameworks across long distances and cultural barriers is a significant challenge.

Entrepreneurs with disabilities

Entrepreneurs with disabilities are another important group. They often launch organizations to address issues they face themselves, using their disability as a comparative advantage. However, not all of them focus on inclusion or accessibility; many develop innovations like any other entrepreneur.



Egalité Inclusion & Diversity (Brazil) has developed an online recruitment platform whose main asset is a behavioural profile evaluation tool. Aimed at multi-national companies, its use requires local license partners.

UNDERSTANDING INPUT, OUTPUT, OUTCOME, AND IMPACT

Inputs are the resources (financial, human, or material) used to perform activities designed to meet specific objectives. In the context of the Zero Project innovative solutions, this generally refers to staff members in an organization, available budgets, and other resources such as office spaces, ICT expertise, and licenses.

Outputs are the immediate, tangible products or services generated by using inputs. They are direct results of activities, but do not represent meaningful change by themselves.

Examples of typical output facts in the context of the Zero Project include the number of users of a service or product, or number of persons trained.

The advantage of input and output figures is that they are usually straightforward to collect, measure, and analyse. The disadvantage is that focusing solely on input and output can lead to misallocation and errors.

Outcomes refer to the short- to medium-term effects or changes resulting from outputs. These

changes can be behavioural, social, or systemic and hold more significance than outputs. In the context of the Zero Project, this includes individuals who have secured employment due to a training course, individuals using an app for navigation, or improved early childhood disability diagnosis.

Impact refers to the long-term, often indirect changes that arise from the outcomes. Typically aligned with broader societal goals, impact can be challenging to measure for several reasons:

- First, impact manifests only in the mid- to long-term.
- Second, the innovative solution is merely one contributing factor among many.
- Third, impact is predominantly indirect.

Within the context of the Zero Project, examples of impact might include a systemic increase in the employment rate of persons with disabilities, the availability and accessibility of ICT-based solutions, or a broadly available quality healthcare service in rural areas.

“The two main qualities of success: resilience and lived experience.”

A DISCUSSION ON INNOVATIONS IN DISABILITY-INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Bob Ludke, co-founder of Value Inclusion, a consultancy on employment across the disability spectrum, and Michael Fembek, CEO of the Zero Project, discuss insights from their latest publications.

Fembek: Bob, your new book is called *Case Studies in Disability-Driven Innovation*. It delves into how innovative ideas can transform lives by rethinking employment and creating business opportunities for persons with disabilities. Why this book, and why now?

Ludke: My book is the product of almost five years of working at the intersection of corporate strategy, disability employment, and innovation. I've spent time with large companies and small businesses alike, observing first-hand how inclusive practices and creative problem-solving drive success.

One common thread is resilience. And many entrepreneurs with disabilities cite their lived experience as a superpower.

It's a collection of real-world examples – from innovators building satellites to major companies like Walmart and Adobe creating accessible customer experiences to entrepreneurs in small towns launching community coffee shops – that illustrate

how disability-driven innovation benefits everyone. I wanted to capture these stories, showcasing not only the technological aspects but also the broader social impact.

One of my most important aims is for readers to see that disability-driven innovation isn't limited to technology; it encompasses any solution that meets human needs and enriches society.

Fembek: Great, so let's talk about social innovation. What is it exactly? I understand that in your book it covers a broad form of innovation – “social,” basically meaning to address human needs. How do you differentiate social innovation from, say, purely technological or business innovation?

Ludke: I view social innovation as the umbrella under which all other innovations fall. It's about creating goods or services that solve all human challenges. Examples I came across ranged from accessibility in public spaces, fashion design, toys for kids, experiences at large, sporting events attended by tens of thousands of people.

Technology is a critical component of innovation, certainly, but it's not the sole driver. For example, a young entrepreneur in Iowa started a coffee shop as a way to avoid a life in sheltered workshops. A coffee shop is not cutting-edge technology, but it has provided lasting value to many people by creating an inclusive community space.

That's social innovation in action. It's about addressing needs, whether through technological tools or more grassroots, community-based solutions.

Fembek: That resonates with our definition of social business or social entrepreneurs. Their work is about impact first, with profitability – or non-profit, or any other form to sustain their business – as a secondary consideration.

Ludke: Exactly. I often hear from venture capitalists that many start-ups focus solely on rapid

ABOUT THE PANELIST



Bob Ludke is the co-founder of Value Inclusion, LLC, a consultancy that brings together c-suite strategy, evidence-based research, and first-hand experience to foster competitive, integrated employment of persons across the disability spectrum.

profit. In contrast, disability-driven innovation is fundamentally about solving persistent problems. Entrepreneurs in this space are not looking to cash out quickly; they're aiming to make a genuine impact on society. Whether it's through community-based projects or more formal business ventures, the emphasis is on adding real value to the lives of people by innovating solutions.

Fembek: Let us stay with this a little more. Most social businesses face barriers that traditional businesses do not, such as working against stigmas, when supporting disadvantaged groups. On top of that, as a non-profit, many have a limited ability to use or build assets, or receive bank loans. Arguably it is a lot harder to run a social business than a classic business. What have you observed about that? Especially persons with disabilities, themselves seemingly in a disadvantaged position to start a social business?

Ludke: One common thread is resilience. Many entrepreneurs with disabilities cite their lived experience as a superpower. Their personal challenges force them to become relentless problem solvers. I've spoken with several who describe each setback as a learning opportunity – a reminder that if they can overcome daily obstacles, they can certainly tackle business challenges. This resilience, combined with the unique perspective they bring, drives innovation that often goes overlooked in mainstream markets.

Innovating in general, but especially when disability-related, is about navigating a landscape that isn't always welcoming or with the supports needed to turn an idea into a reality.

Fembek: With dire consequences not only for the entrepreneurs but for the whole society. We see an important role that government regulations play for many successful scaling models.

But that might be a European, welfare state-induced bias. With your more U.S.-centred

BOB LUDKE'S NEW BOOK



Robert Ludke's new book, *Case Studies in Disability-Driven Innovation: A Better Future Through an Inclusive Economy*, was published in March 2025. The book explores how

disability-driven innovation can create a more inclusive economy and showcases various entrepreneurs and innovators in the field.

experience, how do you experience government influence for innovative solutions?

Ludke: In the United States vocational rehabilitation programmes have played a key role. They provide early-stage funding, help with business planning, and offer networking opportunities. These programmes can be incredibly effective in nurturing entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities. However, there's a flip side. Many government policies, though well-intentioned, inadvertently discourage growth by creating income thresholds that disincentivise scaling. Entrepreneurs often fear that success might mean losing critical benefits, such as healthcare. This policy dilemma is a major barrier.

Fembek: Let us now focus on entrepreneurship – which seems to be a critical factor both in your approach as in the Zero Project research. In your conversations with entrepreneurs, you mentioned that their disability isn't a hindrance – it's a unique advantage. Could you elaborate on the specific

I recall experimenting with an AI image-generating tool when writing *Case Studies in Disability-Driven Innovation*. When I prompted it to create an image of a blind person, the result was full of stereotypes – an old, dishevelled man with outdated accessories.

skills or qualities that set these innovators apart?

Ludke: Every entrepreneur I've spoken with attributes their success to two main qualities: resilience and lived experience. The challenges they face on a daily basis instill a resourcefulness that many others may never develop. This isn't about being inherently more creative; it's about persistence. When faced with a blocked door, they find another way in. Resilience plus the constant need to innovate – whether to navigate a physical barrier or to reimagine business processes – forms the core of their entrepreneurial spirit and problem-solving mind-set.

Fembek: Agreed. We see that innovations brought to scale need mind-sets that bring those ideas into action, and this takes time, commitment, resourcefulness, and a lot more entrepreneurial qualities. The capacity to continuously overcome obstacles is what truly drives sustainable innovation.

Ludke: Agreed. In addition to lived experience and resilience, it is a relentless drive to innovate that not only transforms individual lives but also leads to systemic change in society.

Fembek: Let's close with the importance of technology. Some argue that technology is the sole engine of change, while others see it simply as one of many tools that even needs to be handled with care since technology itself, and on its own, does not solve any problem. What's your take on the importance of technology in disability-driven innovation?

Ludke: Technology is undeniably critical. Many in the disability community describe it as the great

equalizer, enabling people to overcome barriers that once seemed insurmountable. For example, assistive technologies and AI have the potential to transform everyday experiences. Yet, while technology is a powerful enabler, it is only one piece of a broader ecosystem. Real innovation comes from integrating technology with social and organizational changes.

I recall experimenting with an AI image-generating tool when writing *Case Studies in Disability-Driven Innovation*. When I prompted it to create an image of a blind person, the result was full of stereotypes – an old, dishevelled man with outdated accessories. After refining the prompt, the image improved, but it still couldn't get essential details right, such as a white cane. This illustrates that even advanced technologies can miss the mark when it comes to truly understanding the nuanced realities of disability.

The disability community must have a seat at the table when these technologies are developed.

Fembek: I could not agree more. It's essential for tech developers to engage more deeply with the disability community to ensure that their innovations are both inclusive and effective. At the Zero Project, we have started a new initiative here called Equitable AI Alliance, but that is not part of this report.

Bob, it was a pleasure talking to you, and I very much look forward to you presenting your book at the Zero Project Conference!

Ludke: Pleasure as always, and thank you for having me.



NLR Indonesia is part of an international alliance. Its programme My Body Is Mine educates children and young people with leprosy and other disabilities, aged 10 to 18 years, about sexual and reproductive health and rights in schools and health centres. Developed as a national project, the preferred partners are other NGOs, and the costs for local partners are low. NLR Indonesia even funds and passes on the basic teaching materials package at cost price, with no ongoing fees.

Available, affordable, equitable, high quality, and sustainably funded

THE ULTIMATE GOALS OF EACH SCALING STRATEGY

Innovation and scaling must lead to more accessible, disability-inclusive solutions. This should be achieved at earlier stages of development. Scaling up an innovation means making it permanently available and affordable for a substantial number of users or beneficiaries, allowing it to reach its potential on an international scale. However, other aspects must also be considered for successful scaling.

Sustainable funding

To ensure permanent availability and affordability, it is crucial to have the capacities and funding to deliver consistently and at an increasing scale or speed. This poses a challenge for strategy, budgeting, and service delivery, both in the short and long term. Referring to the Stages in Scaling (see p. 18) used in this report, this is only fully achieved at Stage 6.

Sustainable funding is essential for meeting the ultimate goals, and there are limited long-term options to achieve it.

Quality

Any innovation must meet defined quality standards consistently – ideally 100 percent, but at least 99 percent. Supporting persons with disabilities is a unique task, as breakdowns or shortages can cause enormous duress and may even be life-threatening.

A product or service in its scaled version might face issues because:

- The service is delivered by different personnel, and quality control is not directly in the hands of the scale-up organization.
- The product is assembled differently to make it affordable and available, potentially compromising quality.
- Some features may be streamlined, losing parts of its former individualized or accessibility features.

Equality

Innovative solutions must contribute to a more equitable and just society. Solutions affordable only to the most affluent users do not meet this criterion. Solutions that disadvantage non-users should also be avoided. Scaling strategies must not discriminate against user groups or favour some without reason, avoiding all forms of nepotism and corruption.

Accountability

Legal obligations must be transparent, with contact persons easily found on the website. Limitations and potential dangers of using innovative solutions must be communicated openly.

Options for sustainable funding

Affordability and availability are clear objectives, but achieving them smoothly through social or technological innovation is rare, especially considering the framework of sustainability, quality, equality, and accountability.

A crucial factor is sustainable funding (distinct from ecological sustainability). Sustainable funding is essential for meeting these goals, and there are limited long-term options to achieve it. Many innovators and their partners may overlook this fact, possibly due to short-term strategies such as securing small grants or reducing costs. While such methods may suffice for smaller innovations, they are inadequate for scalable solutions.

Option 1: A market-driven, for-profit product or service

Sales revenues are utilized to cover costs, fund necessary investments, and provide returns for investors and creditors. Revenues may also be generated through subscriptions, licensing, advertisements, or other related forms of income.



Livox enables people who cannot communicate verbally and people with learning difficulties to express themselves. It works with a subscription model and primarily looks for partners to help it scale, who also take care of user training.

An alternative but related strategy involves the sale of the organization or its services at a later stage. The purchaser may be a company or other organization seeking to operate it independently or integrate it into existing products and services. This approach is prevalent with emerging technologies and, in some cases, is the most viable option for achieving scale and reaching a substantial number of users

A special case in the field of social innovation is that of social enterprises, which are profit-oriented but invest all their profits in new social innovations or other activities that contribute to the achievement of the organization's overarching goals.

Option 2: A government-based or funded solution
Regulations, licenses, subsidies, or other public sector means can enable or support the scaling of innovative solutions. Certain products and services may not be sold at market prices, as market price implies that supply meets demand at a certain price that may not be affordable to some individuals. Some solutions might be adopted by the public sector, or have publicly funded institutions as their primary customers. Examples include services implemented in institutions.

The Zero Project's innovative solutions are relevant not only to public health and caretaking services but also to schools, universities, training, public transport, housing, arts and entertainment, and information and communication technologies. Most countries have established funding systems for education, universities, health institutions, and arts institutions. Sustainable funding can involve utilizing these existing streams.

Option 3: A permanently grant-funded solution
Some solutions benefit from a sustainable base of funders who support innovation over the long term.

However, these are relatively rare, as grant funding from both the public sector and philanthropists typically supports projects for limited time periods. Solutions that focus on supporting children, emergency responses, or work in impoverished countries tend to be better positioned for this type of funding.

Additionally, solutions that can associate with prestigious organizations or celebrities or that garner high media attention tend to attract certain types of grant givers or collaborative partners. This visibility and association with esteemed projects and organizations are appealing for companies seeking to enhance their public relations efforts, as well as for the public sector. For example, regions or cities organizing events for such prestigious partners often gain media attention and fundraising opportunities.

Option 4: A solution that can be shared at low or no cost.

Certain solutions can be scaled with minimal or no expense, particularly when they require no adaptation to local contexts and are straightforward to understand and implement. Examples of such solutions include ICT-based initiatives that can be disseminated through an open-source platform, a website or app, freely available curricula and training materials, or instructional videos on YouTube.

Option 5: A combination of various strategies
Some successful scaling strategies utilize a combination of options to achieve sustainable funding. For example, services may be sold to companies at market prices while being offered to private users at a lower cost or no cost. The public sector, in particular, plays a critical role in nearly every sustainable funding strategy.

The role of the public sector in finding the right scaling strategy

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The involvement of the government and the public sector is closely related to other methods for achieving sustainable scaling. In economic literature, this aspect is often not covered thoroughly and is not fully understood when analysing strategies and chances for success. Any organization involved in the Zero Project's innovative solutions and their delivery of services or products is connected to the public sector in one way or another.

Licensing and subsidies

The sales of services and products might be regulated or licensed. Whether these licenses apply and whether they present advantages or disadvantages compared to existing solutions can be crucial.

For example, food production and sales are strictly licensed and controlled in many countries, and exceptions for Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) could help promote disability-related producers. Licenses can also enhance the income opportunities and rights of persons with disabilities. For instance, certain professions are licensed exclusively to persons with disabilities, such as tobacconist stores in Austria.

In most countries there is a specific list of products and services eligible for subsidies, and being on this list is crucial for ensuring availability and affordability. Regulations about the definitions of disabilities and eligibility for subsidies play an important role, or if subsidies are related to a person's income.

Programmes of the World Health Organization, of UNICEF, some international treaties such as the Marrakech Treaty, or international certifications (e.g., mandatory accessibility features of the built environment or infrastructure) can also be important.

No regulation and exemptions

Government regulations shape the inclusivity and accessibility of education, transport, built environments, and ICT services. Funding and subsidies impact public, private, and non-profit offerings in caretaking, healthcare, vocational training, assistance services, and job opportunities. Public funding for research and innovation is crucial for initial investments in scaling up.

Securing appropriate listings

Public sector benefits for disability-related solutions are manifested in various forms. A common practice involves providing products from specific taxative lists to users at no cost or significantly reduced prices, with the difference being subsidized by the social security system. However, innovative products, particularly those offering high-quality alternatives that are often more expensive, frequently face obstacles in being included on these lists. Policies governing these inclusions vary significantly across countries and even among states within a single country.

Another critical influence exerted by the public sector pertains to licensing requirements. Restrictive licensing policies may be implemented to maintain high-quality standards or to limit the number of competitors, both at the organizational level and the individual level.

The process of obtaining a license is often protracted, taking longer than anticipated and requiring substantial efforts, such as university-conducted research to demonstrate that the innovative approach yields superior results compared to existing methods.

Other forms of policy-making

- Public innovation agencies may fund innovation processes and research to enhance them.
- Innovators might be involved in setting standards, certifications, or guidelines for new public funding schemes.
- Tax deduction schemes may encourage private donations or company sponsorship, though some countries restrict or prohibit foreign grants and funding.
- Public procurement policies can also serve as a powerful tool to promote accessible ICT devices and software.

SCALING UP BY USING THE RESOURCES OF FOR-PROFIT COMPANIES AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS

Companies and large international NGOs can also play a decisive role in scaling up innovative solutions. They can use a variety of means to promote them or act as catalysts. For start-ups and non-profits this means, most importantly, to have access to resources they receive for free or at discounted rates – definitely conditions and privileges not offered to established for-profit companies. This type of support can be critical in reaching sustainable funding earlier, or at all.

Scaling up solutions often require high-level customers or distribution partners to kick-start their scaling efforts ('testimonials'). This can help create a solid revenue baseline, enable longer-term planning horizons, and serve as a reference.

The added value for companies

Companies working closely with scaling-up solutions benefit from a different (usually more social) mind-set, inclusive thinking, and emerging technologies. They can also benefit from the image of the scale-up, provided there is a compatible image to leverage.

- Some companies engage in corporate volunteering partnerships, offering their employees a meaningful way to work in NGOs or social businesses, usually one or two days per year on paid leave.

- Scaling innovative solutions can use this to broaden their expertise, especially in management skills, marketing and public relations, ICT services, or even using the office premises and basic administration such as bookkeeping from a forthcoming company.
- Companies invite social businesses and NGOs to present at charity events and employee or customer assemblies, providing them with a platform.
- Companies sponsor or fund innovative solutions and their scaling efforts, especially when it comes to promising technology-based solutions. Some companies have sponsorship programmes, run incubator and start-up centres, or have launched foundations.

Additionally, business chambers, business associations, and trade unions can offer valuable support and might even provide innovative services to their members, particularly in improved vocational training or hiring practices.

As mentioned earlier, 'intra-organizational' scaling up is not covered in this report, for example, a multinational company rolling out a diversity programme for hiring practices, or an international NGO rolling out a procurement system where certain products and services can only be bought from DPOs.

Reach & Match supports inclusive education programmes for children with visual impairments. It consists of learning kits with sensory mats and Braille/print alphabet tiles, accompanied by an activity guide and online training videos. It relies on distribution partnerships for its growth.



“Investing in the founder’s growth through leadership development.”

A COMMENTARY BY ANTHONY GIANNOUMIS, CEO OF INCLUSIVE CREATION

Anthony Giannoumis is CEO of Inclusive Creation and is implementing the Scaling Solutions Programme of the Zero Project. In his expert comment, he zooms in on the importance of the founder and leader of an innovative solution.

The experience of scaling an innovation is often framed around funding, market access, and strategic partnerships. While these elements are critical, they often overlook an equally important factor – the founder. In the Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme we have learned that sustainable scaling doesn’t just require operational expansion; it demands an evolution of the leader driving it.

Scaling is about operational expansion, and it’s about evolving the founder’s leadership, mind-set, and resilience to meet the growing demands of impact at scale.

Scaling is about operational expansion, and it’s about evolving the founder’s leadership, mind-set, and resilience to meet the growing demands of impact at scale. Every entrepreneur who has participated in the programme comes with deep expertise in their work, but often faces significant challenges in navigating their own transformation as they take their work to a global level.

One of the key insights from our work is that scaling is personal before it is professional. Founders must develop the capacity to delegate, to build strategic alliances, and to lead both their project and the movement behind it. This requires a shift from being the sole driver of an initiative to becoming an ecosystem builder, someone who creates the conditions for sustainable impact beyond their direct involvement.

We have found that investing in the founder’s growth through leadership development, tailored mentorship, and peer-founder networks leads to more effective and resilient scaling. In practical terms, this means:

- Personalized Scaling Playbooks that align with the founder’s strengths and long-term vision.
- Founder-Focused Support that helps leaders navigate challenges in real time alongside others on the same journey.
- Strategic Positioning and Influence, that is, helping founders to scale not just their solutions but their authority and credibility in the global inclusion space.

Ultimately, solutions don’t scale – leaders do. By shifting the focus from just the mechanics of scaling to the people behind the solutions, we have had the chance to create a lasting impact that extends far beyond the lifecycle of any single programme. The future of scaling isn’t just about bigger numbers; it’s about stronger leaders who are ready to sustain and grow the change they envision.

Ultimately, solutions don’t scale – it is leaders who do!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Anthony Giannoumis is CEO of Inclusive Creation (Norway), the implementing partner of the Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme.

From scale-up organization to local partner, service provider, and end-user

THE VALUE CHAIN IN SCALING ACROSS COUNTRY BORDERS

Scaling up can be compared to a chain reaction in which each component in the sequence influences the next. The overall impact, however, is realized only at the end of the chain, benefiting users or beneficiaries through measurable improvements in the rights and lives of persons with disabilities. As a consequence, sustainable funding models will only work for the end user if they are effective for each link in the chain at all times.

Agreement on sustainable funding models required

Organizations that are seeking to scale up sign contracts with local partners, necessitating both parties to continuously assess their investments, costs, revenues, and growth prospects. Additionally, both parties face non-financial constraints imposed by their owners, directors, funders, and other stakeholders, which they must navigate while developing and executing business plans.

The ultimate objective is to produce as many affordable, available, and accessible products, services, or programmes as possible. This goal, however, often conflicts with limiting factors. Often products and services have to be priced high, occasionally even prohibitively so. Furthermore, other business considerations such as limited production capacities or restricted budgets for research and training must be respected. Making these decisions requires estimating various risks at the same time, many of which decision-makers may have never encountered before, leading to extreme uncertainty.

For both parties to achieve sustainable funding, alignment is essential. If the scaling-up organization chooses a for-business licensing model due to perceived potential with corporate customers, this approach frames the funding model for the local partner as well. The local partner must understand why the scaling-up organization selected this strategy in its home country and, in a second step, determine if it is applicable in the target country as well. Comprehensive analysis will be required to understand critical differences in legislation, taxes, subsidies, competition, distribution opportunities, ethics, culture, and more.

Local partners may or may not be the service providers themselves

Yet, the local partner might prefer to employ a different strategy in its target country. There are several reasons for this.

Partnership models in international scaling can vary, with some local partners being service providers or sales agents themselves, and others acting as intermediaries working with multiple service providers or sales agents, who then serve persons with disabilities (see diagram on page 41). Their core business and expertise can be very different, and they want to stick to that, to their customer-base, and to all other relevant stakeholders. Both the local partner and its next link in the chain can be very different types of entities, including schools, universities, NGOs, ICT-wholesalers, Internet providers, museums, caregiving and health service providers, and companies of any size.

The need to align

An established local partner will typically prefer to utilize its existing resources and expertise rather than 'enter new territory'. Still, a scale-up organization and its local partner must align their sustainable funding strategies, and every difference can create challenges.

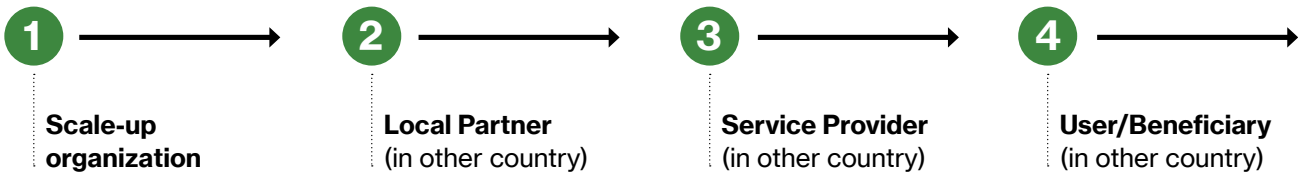
Pros and cons for the scale-up organization

Why should a scale-up organization choose a local partner that directly provides services? Or why should it add another link in the chain between itself and service provision?

Often, working directly with a service provider can limit the growth potential for a scale-up organization. If a local partner acts as a multiplier

The Value Chain in scaling internationally

A successful value chain across country borders has to consider several actors before reaching the end-user.



and engages with a growing number of service providers, this arrangement tends to have a larger growth potential.

However, adding another link in the chain means that the end user of the product or service is further removed from the organization, and adds further complexity and administrative work to the partnership. For products that are easier to understand, ready-made, or more technology-driven, longer chains may operate more smoothly compared to services and programmes that require constant interaction, adaptation, and the human factor.

Business and customer qualifications

Marketing often distinguishes between selling to end-users (B2C) and selling to companies that resell products or services (B2B). In the context of the Zero Project and this report, this needs adjustment due to the significant role of the public sector. Here, the 'B' often represents a public sector-agency rather than a for-profit company, and the 'C' might be purchasing at subsidized prices or receiving products for free. However, this complexity is beyond the scope of this report.

Your influence is not where your impact is

It is both challenging to influence and measure indirect impact along the chain and attribute it to the scaling-up solution. In many instances, innovative solutions enhance only certain aspects of products, services, or programmes. It typically takes several years for a new model of service delivery to reach its full potential.

Most importantly, while assessing the impact at the end of the chain provides a guideline and framework for the scaling-up organization and scaling partners, there are other factors that are more relevant for operational and strategic decision-making.

CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL SCALING

Operational baselines

- Building a lean operating structure
- Leveraging technology for scalability
- Designing adaptable infrastructure and processes
- Understanding core strengths and capacity
- Streamlining processes and outsourcing

Strategic decisions

- Setting clear, measurable objectives for scaling
- Developing a growth roadmap that includes technical, organizational, and infrastructure planning
- Implementing key performance indicators to track scalability

Funding and resource allocation

- Forecasting demand to allocate resources
- Identifying gaps between demand and capacity
- Assessing technology requirements
- Deciding what to outsource and what to buy
- Identifying affordable or pro bono resources

Maintaining inclusion principles

- Ensuring stakeholder participation
- Focusing on user needs in cross-border efforts

Adapting to local context

- Understanding and navigating language and cultural barriers in cross-border operations
- Checking compatibility with legal and socio-political conditions
- Conducting market research to understand local demand and growth opportunities
- Designing flexible business models that can be replicated and adapted to new markets or regions

The overarching importance of participation and inclusiveness

USING AND DEVELOPING PARTICIPATION MODELS AT ALL STAGES OF SCALING

Innovative solutions and scaling processes must be planned, developed, and implemented in coordination and partnership with persons with disabilities, self-representatives, and Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs). The principle of "Nothing about us without us" not only reflects a human rights perspective but also serves as a management gold-standard in innovation and scaling. It is simply impossible to understand needs and solutions without close cooperation with the target group.

Communication among equals

While it may sound obvious, in practice it is a challenge. Stakeholders who are not used to communicating with persons with disabilities often struggle with involving them on an equal level.

Meetings that focus on Excel tables, charts, packed PowerPoint slides, or any other form of visualization on whiteboards will not work for

persons with visual disabilities. Many techniques used in boardroom meetings or seminars must be adapted. Involving deaf persons usually means involving sign language interpretation, requiring an adapted form of discussion. Communication with persons with intellectual disabilities or speech impairments takes longer, needs reduced complexity, and requires regular breaks.

In practice, this means that persons not used to these settings and communications often feel uncomfortable and want to avoid or shortcut processes. Professional attention and support from individuals trained in managing disability-diverse groups are essential.

PILLARS OF ACCESSIBLE PROCESSES

- Accessible communications: Communication with stakeholders, potential customers, and beneficiaries must be planned to be accessible and inclusive from the outset.
- Using accessibility technology: For persons with visual disabilities, accessible websites, screen-reader accessibility, or the use of other smartphone technologies must be provided.
- Supporting the deaf community: For deaf persons, communication involves sign language and captions (subtitles).
- Physical disabilities: There are persons with various forms of physical disabilities, not just wheelchair users. Consider those with reduced ability or the absence of parts of the upper body.
- Intellectual disabilities: Persons with intellectual disabilities are supported by communication in Easy Language, slowed-down processes, and reduced length and complexity.
- Neurodiverse persons may need quiet zones or reduced visual and sensory inputs in both online and in-person communication.
- There are many other forms of disabilities that need to be considered based on the solution and the environment.

Managing cross-national and diverse test and feedback groups

Bringing together diverse stakeholders, including the public sector and potential donors such as foundations, from multiple countries allows for mutual learning and joint assessment of innovative solutions and their scaling potential. In practice, this is a complex management task, as stakeholders must see value in their contributions.

Online meetings or webinars with feedback loops are often chosen but also need careful planning and expertise in making them work for everyone involved.

Organizing testing and adaptation processes

Innovations should be tested in a real-life environment, and in all stages of development. This allows for adjustments based on first-hand feedback, ensuring that the innovations solve real problems.

Access to testing groups in target countries or user groups is often important, placing co-operation with DPOs at the top of management priorities.



SignLab from Norway partners with local sign language organizations and teachers to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula for each new language.

WHAT IS INCLUSION AND WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

The concepts of inclusion and accessibility often lack clarity and are interpreted differently by various stakeholders. These terms, relatively new in their current usage, encompass a range of meanings and applications.

Inclusion and disability-inclusion

Inclusion is frequently used in a broad sense, encompassing all marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Conversely, accessibility is sometimes narrowly defined, focusing on assistive technologies in certain discussions. The ambiguity surrounding these terms can lead to confusion, especially when innovations claim to address inclusion and accessibility without specifying their exact contributions.

Accessible for whom?

Innovative solutions often cater to specific types of disabilities. For instance, technologies designed for individuals with visual impairments

may only support those who are partially sighted, Braille-literate, or tech-savvy. Understanding the target audience is crucial for assessing the scalability of these innovations. For example, Braille-based technology will be most certainly effective in a school setting where Braille is part of the curriculum, but its broader potential depends on the number of Braille users among the visually impaired population of a certain geography or target group.

There might be more users than originally thought

Conversely, some innovations extend their benefits beyond the initial target group. For example, Easy-Language solutions can aid immigrants in foreign countries, while captioning and subtitling technologies, or support systems in remote areas, can enhance services for entire families. Orientation technologies might work not only in urban areas but also for displaced persons.

Knowing what does not work

COMMON BLUNDERS, FAILURES, AND ERRORS

A majority of innovative solutions ultimately fail – at all stages in the scaling phase. And often for similar reasons.

Not yet ready

First and foremost, many ventures that fail were simply not ready. They lack personal capacities in the leadership team, an understanding of the value of their product or service in a larger context, and an understanding of scaling and funding needs and challenges.

Scaling up when the base is not covered

A scenario that leads to failure even more often in social entrepreneurship is viewing scaling up as a quick funding source to solve current liquidity problems. Building new relationships is capacity-intensive, diverting attention from core processes.

Self-deception about the real value

Another common reason for failure is self-deception about the value of the innovation outside its former closed community, where it received encouragement and goodwill. What is offered to partners outside this 'bubble' might not create enough value.

Consider, for instance, a guidebook for teachers and parents against bullying. This can be very successful in one school, and is led by a visionary team of teachers and parents to scale it to other schools. However, the critical success factor might not be in the guidebook itself but in the spirit of those highly engaged parents and teachers. Spirit, however, is impossible to scale as such.

More of the same, but not the same

When scaling across country borders, many products and services turn out to need additional personal capacities or resources, constant maintenance, or other forms of attention, ultimately overwhelming both the scaling-up organization and the scaling partner.

In some markets there is no real exit

Many technologies developed are fascinating, but their markets are dominated by large companies and distributors. In the end, the only way is to work with them, which often never happens.

High-tech eating its own children

High-end technologies tend to revolutionize themselves at an ever-faster pace, consuming their own progeny and the technologies based on them.

When mass-production fails

Some prototyped technologies cannot be mass-produced at affordable prices or adapted efficiently to regional contexts, such as languages.

Misunderstanding the government

Authorities in the target country often react like "Our welfare system is completely different and cannot be simply adapted."

Initial investments that nobody can pay for

If initial investments are high and have to be covered by the local partner, they may not be able to grow and invest. If costs are passed on to users and beneficiaries, they may be too expensive.

Misaligned partnerships

During the planning and negotiating period, many decisions are based on handshake agreements or vague meeting protocols. This often results later in misunderstandings related to financial agreements, details about licensing fees, or strategic decision-making.

Keep it in line or adapting?

The scaling-up organization wants to develop a strategy close to its own (where it is already successful) and keep all scaling partnerships in line (as differences make management more difficult). Meanwhile, the local partner sees the need to adapt to local contexts. This can lead to complete fallouts.

A clash of egos

Related to this, and often caused by it, is a 'Clash of Egos'. Since local partners are usually run by individuals with entrepreneurial spirit and their own vision, this can lead to fallouts that go beyond factual differences, fostering a lot of emotion and leading to unreasonable actions and breakups.

The burnout trap

Social entrepreneurs are more prone to burnout than the average person. Social entrepreneurs, who can never build assets or other safety nets and for whom it is often impossible to sell or hand over an organization, face a looming danger.

Scaling Strategies

8 strategies

Description of each strategy
used for scaling up

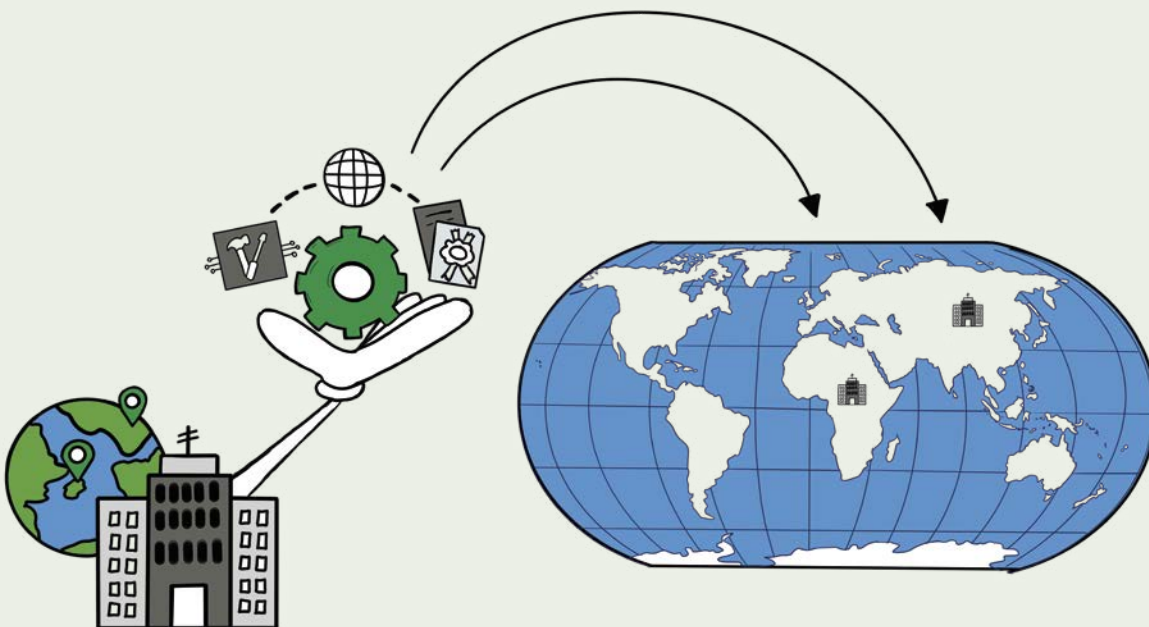
24 organizations

Factsheet on the scaling strategy
of each organization analysed

Strategy 1

Establishing one's own organization in the target country

Some organizations choose to establish their own subsidiaries, forming joint ventures, or creating franchise agreements to ensure consistency, quality control, and sustained impact in target markets.



Teaming up with local partners, or letting them use your methods and technologies through licenses and franchises.

Some of the scale-up organizations in this report have chosen to establish a physical presence in other countries to directly manage operations and services or to maintain tight control over them. This strategy requires that the scale-up organization can offer professional services that demonstrate proven value to for-profit companies, which are also willing to pay market-rate fees for these services. In the target country it can create similar income opportunities for local partners.

Full quality control via own subsidiaries

This strategy requires unique expertise in the offered services, usually connected with continuous improvement of technology and methods, and stringent quality control. For example, **Specialisterne**, the world leader in vocational training and job placement for autistic persons, aims to offer the same quality everywhere to its clients, which are mostly multinational companies. Therefore, it prefers to open its own subsidiary in countries where the demand is economically viable. Alternatively, in countries of less interest, Specialisterne enters into joint ventures or licensing agreements with partners who must meet strict quality criteria. Previous partnerships and countries that did not work out have been closed.

Some scale-up organizations opt to establish their own organizations in a target country as subsidiaries, where they hold all or a majority of the equity in the new company. Professional franchise

agreements are an alternative that grants legal authority to the local partner, with contracts binding both parties closely to each other.

Using franchising and joint-ventures

Ugani Prosthetics, which provides affordable EU-certified prosthetics, prefers to open its own workshops, forming joint ventures with local partners to ensure long-term presence and impact. Although Ugani sells 3D printing kits and training to existing prosthetics and orthotics workshops, these must meet ISPO certification (Cat I/II) for prosthetists and have trained technical staff.

Ugani's model also works like a franchise. The workshops operate under the same name, and partners receive the necessary equipment and training from Ugani. Even after that, Ugani continues to provide materials and mandatory training for partners.

Launching and controlling a non-profit

For non-profits, the alternative is to launch a non-profit in the target country (usually a type of association) where representatives of the scale-up organization play an important role on the board of the local partner. Although public subsidies are not necessary for the operation of this innovative solution, they can be part of it. Examples include subsidized vocational training courses for persons with disabilities, subsidies to make accessible products broadly available, and forms of licensing and public procurement.

Employment model for persons on the autism spectrum, going global

SPECIALISTERNE / DENMARK

Specialisterne, founded in Denmark in 2004, is a global leader in neuroinclusion, helping autistic people and other neurodivergent individuals to access employment. By partnering with businesses and institutions, it has improved hiring practices, provided training, and facilitated over 10,000 job placements in 26 countries. Specialisterne continues to expand its global presence.

Problems targeted

Autistic and neurodivergent people face barriers to employment, as their unique skills are often overlooked, and workplaces lack the support needed for inclusive hiring and work environments.

Specialisterne seeks well-established social organizations that can allocate resources for implementing its services.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Specialisterne, founded in 2004 as a social enterprise in Denmark, has become a global leader in neuroinclusion, helping autistic people and other neurodivergent individuals to access meaningful employment. It collaborates with businesses to assess and improve hiring practices, providing workplace support, training, and policy adaptation.

Beyond corporate partnerships, Specialisterne provides direct services to neurodivergent individuals, including vocational training, job-seeking

support, and specialized academies in IT, manufacturing, and hospitality.

Through partnerships with universities, governments, and philanthropic organizations, Specialisterne supports neurodivergent students from primary school to higher education. In 2024, a \$1.1 million grant from the Hg Foundation enabled the expansion of its Academy programme to the United States. With operations in 26 countries and offices in 13, Specialisterne has facilitated employment for over 10,000 neurodivergent job seekers across 500 companies over the last two decades.

Strategy and objectives

Specialisterne aims to expand globally to better serve multinational clients and increase societal impact by disseminating its programmes. In the past, Specialisterne has used three strategies to expand its global presence:

- (1) establishing subsidiaries in strategic markets,
- (2) forming joint ventures and license agreements in complex regions, and
- (3) partnering with local organizations to deliver services.

Specialisterne is now interested in reframing its scaling strategy, focusing on strategic openings alongside proactive efforts to find licensees and partners.

The regional focus includes large-population and outsourcing-driven countries, as many IT and administrative tasks – a good fit for autistic individuals – are in high demand in these regions. Specialisterne currently targets Germany, the UK, Poland, and the Philippines, with additional interest in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region, expanding from its base in Australia.

Scaling and implementation

Currently, Specialisterne operates in 26 countries and has subsidiaries or licensees in 13, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France,

FACTS & FIGURES

- Specialisterne operates in 26 countries and has subsidiaries or licensees in 13.
- Over 10,000 neurodivergent job seekers have been placed in the last 20 years.
- The global client base includes over 500 companies.



Francesc Sistach

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On the individual level, Specialisterne provides direct services to autistic people and other neurodivergent individuals, including vocational training, job-seeking support, and specialized academies in IT, manufacturing, and hospitality.

Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the United States. While consolidation efforts have resulted in closures and mergers, Portugal was added in 2024, and expansion is ongoing in the UK and India. The organization employs 560 people globally, with 200 in management, training, and project roles, and 360 neurodivergent employees providing outsourcing services in Brazil, Denmark, Italy, and Spain.

Partner requirements

Specialisterne seeks well-established social organizations that can allocate resources for implementing its services. Past experiences have shown that small organizations often lack the capacity for sustainable operations. Additionally, it collaborates with multilateral organizations, global sponsors, and corporate clients to fund market expansion. For example, Specialisterne Mexico was established with a \$750,000 grant from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Investment and funding

Partners must be financially stable and committed. License holders pay an entry fee of \$250,000, which includes Specialisterne's support for the first two years, access to its global client base with over 500 customers, and business development assistance. After two years, annual fees are expected to be around \$50,000, based on revenue and service usage. Specialisterne estimates

potential annual revenues of at least \$500,000 per location, depending on the implemented model.

Support and network

Since 2004, Specialisterne has developed innovative recruitment and management practices to support the neurodiverse workforce. Its partners benefit from a well-established methodology and operational expertise. The organization includes teams dedicated to marketing, social impact measurement, and continuous service development. International work groups ensure that best practices are shared across regions, reinforcing its global network for neuroinclusion.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Specialisterne wants to provide services to its multinational customers.
- Specialisterne prioritises strategic openings ahead of licensees and partners.
- Preferred partners are well-established social organizations with resources.
- Expansion targets include Germany, Poland, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific.

3D production of high-quality prosthetics in low-income countries

UGANI PROSTHETICS / BELGIUM

Ugani Prosthetics, a Belgian start-up company, has developed an innovative workflow using open-source tools and 3D printing technology to provide affordable, high-quality prosthetics. This solution, which makes prosthetics 3–5 times cheaper than traditional alternatives, is already scaling across 15 countries, helping underserved populations globally.

Problems targeted

High costs, limited infrastructure, and a lack of trained professionals leave many amputees without proper care, especially in underserved regions.

Ugani's business model is primarily business-to-business, focusing on partnerships with local workshops. The other strategy is to partner with large-scale, donor-funded projects with organizations such as UNICEF.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Ugani Prosthetics, a start-up company based in Belgium, has developed an innovative workflow to produce affordable prosthetics targeted at people in low-income countries. Ugani uses open-source tools and 3D-printing technology to produce affordable, high-quality prosthetics and braces

for a variety of body parts, including above-knee, below-knee, arms, wrists, fingers, and more.

Ugani's products meet EU certification standards and are 3 to 5 times more affordable than traditional prosthetics. The use of low-cost, table-top 3D printers and smartphones as 3D scanners reduces setup costs and production time, and robotic simulation technology further ensures durability. The key innovation lies in accessibility and mobility, as prosthetists can travel to remote locations, scan patients in their homes, and deliver finished products in just a few days. This makes Ugani's service especially valuable in underserved and conflict regions.

Strategy and objectives

Ugani Prosthetics aims to reach over 50,000 amputees by 2030 by setting up 10 to 15 workshops in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The organization's goal is to disrupt the prosthetics market by offering affordable alternatives, prompting competitors to reduce prices, thus improving accessibility for more people.

Operating on an open-source model, Ugani does not prioritize intellectual property. The free software enables prosthetists to design standard prosthetic sockets, with a premium version offering additional features such as advanced suspension systems and patient management tools for a fee. This premium version supports licensed or franchise partners, enabling them to scale operations more effectively.

Ugani's business model is primarily business-to-business, focusing on partnerships with local workshops. The company also works on large-scale, donor-funded projects with organizations such as UNICEF, which target underserved populations in Nepal and Palestine, among others. Existing workshops can purchase Ugani's 3D solution for less than \$20,000, including machines, training, inventory and the 3D kit.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Ugani Prosthetics provides affordable, EU-certified prosthetics.
- Ugani Prosthetics are 3–5 times cheaper than alternatives.
- Ugani's open-source 3D-printing method has expanded to 15 countries and the software has 200 registered users worldwide.



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The use of low-cost, table-top 3D printers and smartphones as 3D scanners reduces setup costs and production time, and robotic simulation technology further ensures durability.



Scaling and implementation

Since launching in Belgium in 2021, Ugani Prosthetics has established subsidiaries in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The open-source software is available globally, with over 200 prosthetists in more than 50 countries using it. In select regions, Ugani establishes its own workshops called Prothea, which are joint ventures with local partners to ensure a long-term presence and impact. In 2024 alone, Ugani partnered with workshops in Belgium, Denmark, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and South Africa. Ugani also sells 3D-printing packs and training to existing workshops. Ugani's revenue has grown significantly, from \$5,000 in 2022 to over \$400,000 in 2023.

Partner requirements

While the organization welcomes financial contributions for individual patients, its focus is on professional partnerships with existing prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) workshops, requiring ISPO Cat I or II certification. Technical staff with engineering degrees can also be trained, but only qualified prosthetists or orthotists are eligible for prosthetics training.

Investment and funding

To set up an own workshop, Ugani requires an investment of at least \$100,000 to cover the setup of four 3D-printers and the infrastructure to support up to 100 patients per month. For larger

projects involving tens of thousands of patients, the required investment can reach up to \$10 million. Funds typically come from external financial partners, donations, and revenues generated from prosthetic sales.

Support and network

Ugani provides the necessary tools, machines, and training to establish or improve workshops, while its digital technology enables service delivery in remote areas, including conflict zones.

The company's training model ensures that new partners can build sustainable operations through access to materials and ongoing support. Training programmes are mandatory and designed to cover all aspects of effective operation.

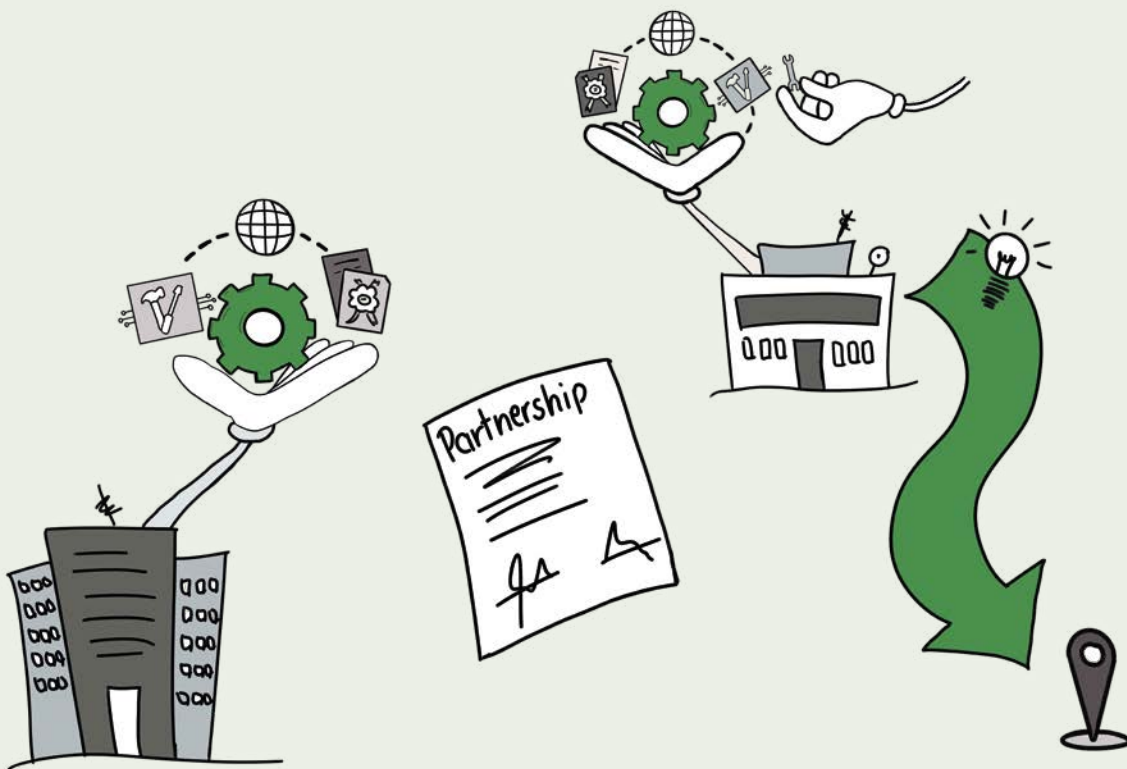
SCALING STRATEGY

- Ugani plans to set up 10–15 workshops in low- and middle-income countries by 2030.
- Ugani's business model is primarily business-to-business.
- Preferred partners include local workshops and NGOs such as UNICEF.
- Partners must meet ISPO certification (Cat I/II) for prosthetists and have trained technical staff.
- To establish a new workshop, Ugani requires an investment of at least \$100,000.

Strategy 2

Engaged licensing partnership for quality ICT-based services

Some organizations choose to scale internationally by licensing their ICT-based solutions to local partners, enabling improved accessibility, inclusivity, personalization, and service quality in new markets.



In licensing partnerships, the local partner uses a professional service, often based on an ICT-platform, that helps it to generate their own revenue. Local partners are often different organization than the scale-up partner.

Some scale-up organizations focus on finding licensing partners for their ICT-based solutions, which notably enhances services in communications, healthcare, education, early childhood intervention, and employment services. Such organizations are often start-ups, closely associated with or founded by Disabled People's Organizations. They must demonstrate proof-of-concept within their home countries to start scaling.

Creating value for the licensing partner

These services can add value to their licensing partners in several ways:

- Increasing accessibility: integrating additional communication forms such as sign language;
- Promoting inclusivity: enabling service delivery to disadvantaged, formerly unreachable groups;
- Personalizing services: allowing providers to engage with individuals through improved diagnostics, data, personalized care opportunities, or personalized communications;
- Enhancing quality: offering access to professional expertise, curricula, or bridging gaps to remote areas.

Professional and revenue-generating

Local partners are often different kinds of service providers (social services or communication services) that must ensure their new service is professional, revenue-generating, or sometimes attracting public sector support.

Scale-up organizations seek long-term cooperation, often finding themselves as smaller entities working alongside much larger partners. Typically, licensing agreements are complex and require ongoing ICT updates and training.

DeafTawk, a for-profit start-up technology company based in Islamabad, Pakistan, connects deaf users with certified sign language interpreters through an app. To enter a new market, DeafTawk needs 50 qualified sign language interpreters for a minimum of 2,000 potential users. To facilitate scaling to other countries, DeafTawk has three strategies that will be applied depending on market conditions, demand, and potential partnerships: subscription, licensing, or a software-as-a-service model for B2B customers.

Egalité Inclusion & Diversity, is a Brazilian social business that developed an online recruitment platform whose main asset is a behavioural profile evaluation tool used to individually determine the professional potential of persons with disabilities. Although the platform is primarily aimed at multinational companies, its use requires local license partners that are trained accordingly and can engage both job seekers and employers.

Livox, a Brazilian social enterprise, has developed Livox – an AI-powered assistive communication platform that enables people who cannot communicate verbally and people with learning difficulties to express themselves through customizable virtual cards. Livox works with a subscription model and primarily looks for distribution partners to help it scale. These partners must also handle interface translation where necessary and take care of user training, which, despite the platform's support for machine learning and AI, has proven necessary for the successful launch of the solution in a new market.

Sign language relay service with a successful scaling strategy

DEAFTAWK / PAKISTAN

DeafTawk, a for-profit start-up technology company based in Islamabad, Pakistan, has developed a mobile application that connects deaf users with certified sign language interpreters in real-time. With its AI-powered technology, the solution has benefitted 97,000 users across five countries and provided over 500,000 hours of interpretation.

Problems targeted

The general public's lack of familiarity with sign language and the shortage of qualified interpreters create significant barriers to communication for deaf individuals.

When evaluating a new market, DeafTawk looks for a deaf community of at least 2,000 users and 50 qualified sign language interpreters.

Solution, innovation, and impact

DeafTawk, a for-profit start-up technology company based in Islamabad, Pakistan, offers a mobile app that provides real-time sign language interpretation through video calls. Users can select 'book now' for immediate interpretation or 'book later' to schedule an appointment with an interpreter who has relevant expertise. The service operates 24/7 and is available to individuals, businesses, and institutions.

FACTS & FIGURES

- DeafTawk serves some 97,000 users, providing more than 500,000 hours of interpretation.
- The AI technology offers 98 percent accuracy in translating text and speech into sign language.
- Between 2020 and 2024, DeafTawk helped 1,800 deaf individuals find jobs and 1,200 to access higher education.

DeafTawk's AI-driven technology, capable of translating text and speech into sign language with 98 percent accuracy, is set to launch for business-to-business (B2B) customers. Currently, the AI supports American, Pakistani, and Chinese Sign Language. Since expanding from Pakistan to Denmark, Singapore, and the United States, DeafTawk has served 97,000 users, providing over 500,000 hours of interpretation. Between 2020 and 2024, DeafTawk facilitated job placements for 1,800 deaf individuals and supported 1,200 others in accessing higher education. In 2024, DeafTawk generated \$1,621,000 in revenue, with 69 percent derived from B2B clients.

Strategy and objectives

When evaluating a new market, DeafTawk looks for a deaf community of at least 2,000 users and 50 qualified sign language interpreters. The company also assesses the presence of B2B clients.

DeafTawk employs three distinct business models to drive growth:

- SaaS model: Used primarily for B2B clients.
- Licensing model: Local deaf associations and mobile network operators are key partners.
- Subscription-based services: Primarily used in Pakistan, where DeafTawk directly manages the service to ensure quality and accessibility.

Each model is tailored to meet market needs, available partnerships, and operational feasibility. DeafTawk also plans to expand beyond sign language interpretation, adapting its technology to support people with other disabilities by complying with W3C accessibility standards.

Scaling and implementation

Currently, 65 percent of DeafTawk's user base is international, with significant markets in Sri Lanka (20 percent), Singapore (18 percent), the United States (15 percent), and Denmark (12 percent). The



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Users are charged on a per-minute basis for sign language interpretation services, with rates adjusted according to local costs for interpreters.

company maintains a steady growth rate of 20 percent annually.

Partner requirements

DeafTawk seeks partnerships with organizations that have national reach and technological capabilities, such as mobile network operators (MNOs) and DPOs of the deaf. Those DPOs play a crucial role in engaging users, onboarding them, and providing customer support. In contrast, MNOs offer technical support and infrastructure, including VoIP (voice-over-internet protocol) services. Each partnership is selected based on its ability to meet the specific needs of the market and contribute to the sustainable growth of the service.

Investment and funding

DeafTawk's financial model emphasizes minimal upfront costs for partners, focusing on human resources and implementation support. Revenue is shared on an 80/20 basis, with partners receiving 20 percent of the income from subscriptions and service fees. Running costs for partners typically involve sales personnel and workspace, while marketing expenses are covered by DeafTawk.

Users are charged on a per-minute basis for sign language interpretation services, with rates adjusted according to local costs for interpreters. In developing markets, users often pay these costs directly, while in more developed economies funding may come from state programmes, insurance, or donors who sponsor free minutes for deaf users.

To achieve financial sustainability in new

markets, DeafTawk requires a minimum of 1,000 active users. The company ensures long-term sustainability by leveraging its B2B model and AI solutions, which allow for healthy profit margins and support ongoing expansion.

Support and network

DeafTawk provides comprehensive support to its partners, including marketing campaigns, promotional drives, and free promotional minutes to attract users. Technical support is available to ensure seamless operations, and DeafTawk also invests in capacity-building for partners.

SCALING STRATEGY

- The goal is to expand globally to provide accessible communication for the deaf community.
- Scaling is achieved by employing SaaS, licensing, and subscription models in various markets.
- Preferred partners are national MNOs and deaf associations.
- Key requirements include strong tech infrastructure and experience with start-ups.
- Focus is on expanding to support other disabilities via W3C standards.

Inclusive recruitment platform used by NGOs, associations, and governments

EGALITÉ INCLUSION & DIVERSITY / BRAZIL

Egalité Inclusion & Diversity, a Brazilian social enterprise, has developed an innovative online recruitment platform to support persons with disabilities. This platform utilizes AI and behavioural profiling, offering free e-learning and accessibility features, with global ambitions to connect job seekers to inclusive employers.

Problems targeted

Companies of a certain size are required to hire persons with disabilities, but stigma, lack of access, and poor hiring practices limit the number of people employed.

Egalité is looking for licensing partners that can help connect persons with disabilities to employers. Ideal partners include governments, NGOs specializing in disability employment, and business disability networks.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Egalité Inclusion & Diversity is a Brazilian social business that developed an online recruitment platform, incorporating a behavioural profile evaluation tool and offering free e-learning courses tailored to persons with disabilities. The platform also includes various accessibility features such as screen readers and sign language options. Candidates take a behavioural assessment, which generates one of 3,125 possible profiles based on

their potential rather than their disability or current activities. This profile is combined with AI and algorithms that factor in location, education, and other relevant details to match candidates with suitable job opportunities.

During the pandemic, the organization created IncluirPcD, an online job fair that hosted 10,000 job opportunities for over 20,000 job seekers in 2024. Egalité's operating budget of \$500,000 is entirely funded by companies that pay recruitment fees based on the salary of job openings. There are no charges for job seekers. On average, candidates recruited through Egalité earn 76 percent more than the minimum wage annually, with benefits raising this figure to 120 percent. By 2025, Egalité aims to have 120,000 candidates in its database and 15,000 people employed.

Strategy and objectives

Egalité seeks to scale its platform internationally by partnering with multinational companies and local organizations. The primary strategy is to license its platform to local partners who can use it to connect job seekers with inclusive employers. While the platform is initially available in Portuguese, Spanish and English, it could be adapted to other regions if appropriate partners are found.

Scaling and implementation

Egalité's platform was piloted in the United States with a focus on recruiting workers over the age of 50. While the technology implementation was effective, the project was not funded long-term. A similar pilot was conducted in Chile in collaboration with the Bolsa Nacional de Empleo, a government entity under the Ministry of Labour. Although the pilot showed positive results with 1,367 registered beneficiaries and over 200 job opportunities, the project was disrupted due to a change in government. Egalité is currently re-engaging with new partners in Chile; and it is also exploring

FACTS & FIGURES

- In 2024, Egalité had 100,000+ candidate profiles in its database.
- On average, candidates recruited through Egalité earn 76 percent more than the minimum wage annually.
- The platform's operating budget is \$500,000, funded by recruitment fees from companies.



Guilherme Braga

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Job candidates take a behavioural assessment, which generates one of 3,125 possible profiles based on their potential rather than their disability or current activities (photo: Egalité founder Guilherme Braga)

partnerships in other countries, including Bangladesh, Nigeria, Uganda, the United States, and the United Kingdom, where it has already provided consulting and training services.

Partner requirements

Egalité is looking for licensing partners that can help connect persons with disabilities to employers. Ideal partners include governments, NGOs specializing in disability employment, and business disability networks. These partners should be capable of engaging both job seekers and employers. Successful implementation requires financial and technical resources, but the commitment level varies based on the partnership model. Egalité offers a licensing or training-based support approach to ensure partners can effectively implement and sustain the solution.

Investment and funding

The initial investment required to implement Egalité's platform in a new country ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000, depending on the level of customization needed. This includes technical integration into the partner's website and training for local partners, as well as ongoing support. Annual maintenance and support costs typically range from \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on the number of users and data storage needs. These costs are covered by licensing partners, with additional potential support from governments, NGOs, or private sector stakeholders.

Support and network

Egalité not only licenses its platform but also provides consulting services, training, and best practices for engaging businesses in disability inclusion. The support offered to partners varies based on their level of engagement and specific needs. It can include capacity-building programmes, technical assistance, and strategic guidance. The nature and cost of this support depend on the partnership model and the partner's requirements.

SCALING STRATEGY

- By 2025, Egalité aims to have 120,000 candidates in its database and 15,000 people employed.
- The platform is licensed to local partners, enabling them to connect job seekers with inclusive employers.
- Preferred partners include governments, NGOs, and business disability networks with strong local networks.
- Partners must provide financial and technical resources, with varying commitment levels.
- Egalité is adapting the platform to Spanish- and English-speaking countries.

AI-powered ICT-platform supporting nonverbal individuals in their education

LIVOX INTERNATIONAL / BRAZIL

Livox International LLC, based in Brazil, has developed Livox, an innovative AI-powered assistive communication platform. This solution fosters educational inclusion by enabling nonverbal individuals and those with learning difficulties to express themselves. Livox's impact is expanding globally, benefiting over 25,000 users across 11 countries.

Problems targeted

People who cannot communicate verbally or those with learning difficulties are at risk of being excluded from the education system.

Livox seeks partners with expertise in healthcare and education. Distributors should be adept at government procurement and regulatory compliance, ensuring smooth market integration.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Livox International LLC is a Brazilian social enterprise that has developed Livox – an AI-powered assistive communication platform that enables people who cannot communicate verbally and people with learning difficulties to express themselves through customizable virtual cards. The system employs intelligent algorithms and machine learning to ensure the platform is responsive to the user's needs. For example, it learns to correct

touch if someone has difficulty touching the screen, or it responds to blinking if that is someone's preferred communication method. Further, it adapts to the context and display cards that are relevant to the time or location.

Livox fosters educational inclusion by allowing students to engage in classroom discussions and activities. Caregivers and professionals can monitor progress through the online tool, while users create or share educational content via the Livox Store. Recent advancements include generative AI, which autonomously generates communication boards, and a partnership with OpenAI to integrate new voice technologies. In 2023, Livox partnered with the Lego Foundation to embed their play principles into the platform, significantly enhancing the interactive experience for children with disabilities. Livox currently has more than 25,000 users in 11 countries, is compatible with 25 languages, and is looking to expand to other regions.

Strategy and objectives

Livox aims to scale its technology globally, with a strategic focus on the Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, the United States, and French- and German-speaking countries. Given the diversity of government funding and insurance models, the company adopts a flexible partnership approach. The platform's offline capabilities have already demonstrated success in low-infrastructure environments such as Djibouti, proving accessibility beyond Internet-dependent solutions.

Scaling and implementation

Livox has expanded to Brazil, Egypt, Jordan, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, and the United States through local distributors that handle translation, pricing, and government sales. Market entry varies. In the U.S., for instance, reliance on health insurance slows adoption, while Swiss partnerships with insurers facilitate access. In the Middle

FACTS & FIGURES

- Livox has over 25,000 users across 11 countries.
- The platform is compatible with 25 languages, enhancing global accessibility.
- Livox also operates offline, proving effective in low-infrastructure environments.



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Livox fosters educational inclusion by allowing students to engage in classroom discussions and activities. Caregivers and professionals can monitor progress through the online tool, while users create or share educational content via the Livox Store.

East a local organization supports translation and distribution, with pilot programmes underway in additional countries. Continuous algorithm refinement enhances communication, ensuring more meaningful interactions between nonverbal individuals and their surroundings.

Partner requirements

Livox seeks partners with expertise in healthcare and education, particularly in Spanish-speaking regions. Distributors should be adept at government procurement and regulatory compliance, ensuring smooth market integration. They also need to handle interface translation where necessary and contribute to region-specific pricing models based on economic indicators, such as GDP and the Human Development Index (HDI).

Beyond distributors, Livox collaborates with NGOs, government agencies, and international educational institutions for pilot projects. Key funding and inclusion allies include philanthropic organizations focusing on disability inclusion, technology, and/or education.

Investment and funding

Livox operates on a subscription model, with partners earning up to 50 percent commission on sales and renewals, plus additional revenue from training. License costs range from \$35 to \$63 per month, varying by country based on GDP and HDI. In the United States a lifetime license costs \$900, with an annual 20 percent renewal fee for

continued support and updates. Training is complimentary for individual users, while large-scale implementations may incur training fees, particularly for organizations unfamiliar with alternative communication methods.

Support and network

Livox provides comprehensive partner support, including training, technical assistance, and marketing resources. Its AI-driven adaptability, multilingual capabilities, and device integration make it highly versatile across global markets. Continuous software updates enhance functionality, ensuring sustained innovation and user-centric improvements.

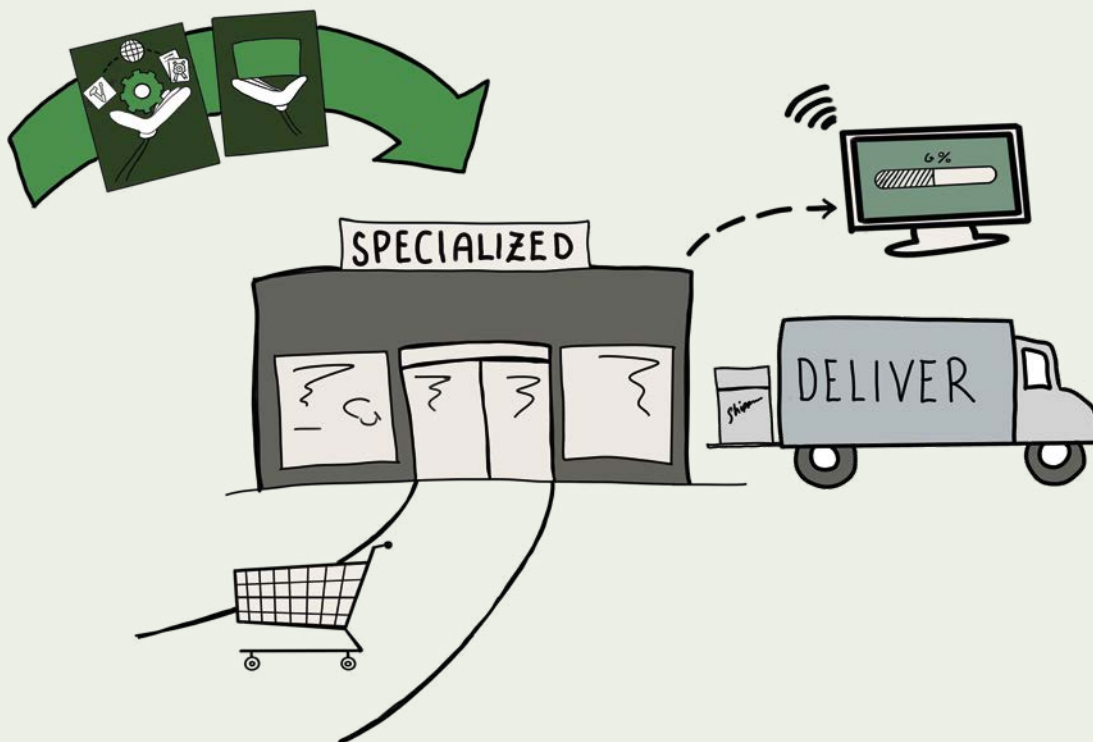
SCALING STRATEGY

- Livox operates on a subscription model, varying by country based on GDP and HDI.
- Distribution partners can earn up to 50 percent commission.
- Preferred partners have expertise in healthcare, education, and government sales.
- Distributors must handle local translations, regulatory compliance, and pricing models.
- Livox collaborates with other partners for funding, piloting, and advocacy.

Strategy 3

Sales and distribution contracts for ready-made products

Some organizations choose to expand internationally through distribution and sales partnerships, enabling them to efficiently deliver consumer-ready products to diverse markets with minimal local adaptation.



Products such as electronic devices, haptic learning materials, and toys can be used identically by buyers in any country. Ideally, these products can also be mass-produced and shipped from a logistics centre all over the world, and sold by local partners.

Forming sales and distribution partnerships is a fundamental strategy found in any economics handbook. It is also employed by scale-up organizations in this report, particularly those offering consumer or ready-made products.

Some products, such as electronic devices, haptic learning materials, and toys, can be used identically by buyers in any country. Ideally, these products can also be mass-produced and shipped from a logistics centre all over the world. Local partners – sales agents, distributors, but also public entities such as education and training institutions – require only minimal support for import procedures, general user instructions, translations accompanying the shipment, or an online helpdesk.

Typically, a contract is signed between the scale-up organization and the local partner, defining:

- The distribution and logistics framework
- Price ranges for buying and selling, and expected sales figures
- Availability of training materials and other support

Local partners do not necessarily have to use the same marketing, sales, and distribution model as the scale-up organization. They may utilize online stores or have access to specific target groups, such as large NGOs and service providers, training institutes, producers of educational material, or wholesale/retail stores catering to persons with disabilities and older persons.

Hable One, a Dutch start-up, developed a portable device that improves the accessibility of smart-phones and tablets, also called Hable One. The product is sold online via the company's website, on Amazon, and through resellers specializing in technical products or assistive solutions for persons with disabilities. However, it is also crucial to have the distributor's knowledge of legal requirements, price sensitivity, and financial support for purchasing products that make life easier for persons with disabilities.

Reach & Match, an Australian social enterprise providing an inclusive education programme for children with vision impairments, also relies on distribution partnerships for its growth. Seventy percent of sales are generated this way, 10 percent through direct sales, and 20 percent through strategic partnerships with NGOs and aid organizations. The product consists of learning kits with sensory mats and Braille/print alphabet tiles, accompanied by an activity guide and online training videos. In the case of Reach & Match, however, the company also offers pilot projects or licensing opportunities to organizations interested in using their learning kits. Such pilot projects provide a quick and easy way to test an innovative solution in another country without making a major financial or contractual commitment.

Device supporting smartphone accessibility for people with visual impairments

HABLE ONE / NETHERLANDS

Hable One B.V., a Netherlands-based start-up, has developed the Hable One, a portable device that enhances smartphone and tablet accessibility, thus enabling users to navigate and type without relying on visual cues. Between 2022 and 2024 it has already gained over 3,000 users in 40+ countries, and it continues expanding with new innovations to increase its reach.

Problems targeted

For many people with a visual impairment the flat touch-screen interface is difficult to use, denying access to devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Local partners should have experience in assistive technology distribution, a strong network within the disability sector, and the ability to finance pilot programmes.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Hable One B.V., a start-up company based in the Netherlands, has developed the Hable One, a portable device that enables visually impaired individuals to use smartphones and tablets more easily. Weighing 90 grams, it connects via Bluetooth and features tactile buttons for navigation and Braille input, supporting VoiceOver and TalkBack commands. Compatible with iOS and Android, it is available in multiple languages, with more being

added. Hable One works with more than 50 blind or visually impaired ambassadors to guide new developments of the product, and finances its operations and growth with investors.

Since its 2022 launch, Hable One has expanded from three to over 40 countries, serving more than 3,000 active users. In 2024 the company introduced Hable Easy, a remote controller simplifying smartphone use with just eight buttons, aiming to increase accessibility for a broader audience.

Strategy and objectives

Expansion efforts focus on online sales and partnerships with local organizations to reach visually impaired communities. Key growth markets include Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom, with exploratory efforts in Africa and Asia. To ensure the product is viable in different cultural and economic contexts, necessary adaptations include developing region-specific Braille languages, integrating with lower-cost smartphones or tablets, and creating tailored support materials such as documentation and educational videos. Insights from pilot programmes in regions such as the Philippines and East Africa have helped refine these adjustments for maximum impact. Hable One is actively looking for investors to raise approximately €1 million for growth, but also to introduce a set of new products to address further challenges faced by people with visual impairments.

Scaling and implementation

Hable One has successfully expanded to over 40 countries, including Africa, Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, and the United States. The company collaborates with local distributors and organizations to increase accessibility and user engagement. Hands-on demonstrations and awareness campaigns are key to its strategy. With over 80 percent of revenue generated internationally, Hable One expects global demand to grow

FACTS & FIGURES

- Hable One works with distributors in 40+ countries, including Europe, Japan, and the United States.
- More than 3,000 active users benefit from the device's accessibility features.
- The company introduced Hable Easy in 2024, simplifying smartphone control.



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Weighing 90 grams, the Hable One connects via Bluetooth and features tactile buttons for navigation and Braille input, supporting VoiceOver and TalkBack commands.

further, exceeding 90 percent of revenue in the near future.

Partner requirements

Ideal partners should have experience in assistive technology distribution, a strong network within the disability sector, and the ability to drive outreach and awareness efforts. Since online sales remain the primary scaling strategy, partners who can finance pilot programmes or act as distributors in their markets are especially valuable.

Successful adoption depends on legal frameworks supporting assistive technology, active user communities, regional purchasing power, language compatibility, and partnerships with rehabilitation clinics and disability organizations. In lower-income regions, funding accessibility remains a key factor.

Investment and funding

Entering new markets requires financial investments in distribution, marketing, and pilot programmes. Distribution partners bear initial costs, but benefit from margins of 20–30 percent per unit sold. Agreements with DPOs and other funding entities vary based on collaboration models. Initial costs for distributors depend on the region, but are incorporated into minimum order quantities, ensuring financial viability. A flexible pricing model adjusts costs to different markets, reducing prices in low-income areas while maintaining sustainability through alternative revenue streams.

Support and network

Hable One provides financial incentives, high-quality assistive technology, and comprehensive support to its partners. Competitive pricing is combined with training, knowledge-sharing, and dedicated account management to ensure smooth collaboration.

While Hable One does not currently have a formal certification process for distributors, it is developing one as the product portfolio expands. To maintain strong long-term partnerships, the company provides dedicated account managers who offer continuous support.

SCALING STRATEGY

- The goal is to expand in Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom as well as to emerging markets.
- Online sales and partnerships with local organizations drive expansion.
- Preferred partners have experience in assistive technology and outreach.
- Partners must provide funding, legal support, and community connections.
- Market-specific adaptations ensure accessibility across diverse regions.

A multi-sensory play kit supporting the development of all children

REACH & MATCH – AUSTRALIA

Reach & Match, an Australian social enterprise, provides a research-based, inclusive education programme for children with vision impairments and multiple disabilities. Through sensory play and teacher training, the programme has reached over 35,000 children across eight countries, enhancing school readiness and learning outcomes.

Problems targeted

Many children with disabilities lack inclusive and accessible educational tools for school readiness and mainstream early childhood education integration.

Reach & Match seeks distribution and licensing partners, as well as NGOs and government agencies willing to support pilot projects and scaling initiatives.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Reach & Match, an Australian social enterprise, offers a research-based, inclusive play-based learning programme designed for children with vision impairments and multiple disabilities. Its sensory learning kits include sensory mats and Braille/print alphabet tiles fostering cognitive, motor, and social development through over 40

adaptable activities. Measured outcomes include improved school readiness, enhanced learning achievements, and greater teacher confidence in supporting children with disabilities. Since its launch in 2014, Reach & Match has impacted over 35,000 children across eight countries, earning multiple awards and collaborating with organizations such as World Vision and UNICEF.

Strategy and objectives

Reach & Match aims to scale its inclusive education programme internationally, supporting children with disabilities in mainstream and special education settings. The goal is to expand its reach by 30,000 additional children over the next 3–5 years. The strategy involves developing accessible curriculum resources, expanding teacher training, and integrating assistive technologies into learning experiences. Strong partnerships with schools, disability advocacy groups, and government bodies will facilitate local adaptation and implementation.

Priority regions include Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada, China and Asia-Pacific region. However, Reach & Match remains flexible and open to other opportunities aligned with its mission. Adaptations of the programme will allow it to serve broader target groups, ensuring applicability in diverse educational settings.

Scaling and implementation

Reach & Match has expanded its programme in various countries, including Australia, Hong Kong (China), Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States and several countries across Europe and Scandinavia. Its expansion model relies on a combination of direct sales (10 percent), distributor partnerships (70 percent), and strategic collaborations with NGOs and relief organizations (20 percent).

FACTS & FIGURES

- Reach & Match has benefited over 35,000 children in eight countries since 2014.
- The programme includes 40+ adaptable learning activities using sensory mats and Braille/print tiles.
- Expansion relies on direct sales (10 percent), distributors (70 percent), and NGO partnerships (20 percent).



Mandy Lau

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Reach & Match consists of sensory mats and Braille/print alphabet tiles fostering cognitive, motor, and social development through over 40 adaptable activities.

Partner requirements

Reach & Match seeks distribution and licensing partners, as well as NGOs and government agencies willing to support pilot projects and scaling initiatives. Distribution partners should have expertise in educational product distribution, strong networks in inclusive education, and the capacity to manage storage and logistics. Licensing partners may include education ministries, NGOs focusing on disabilities, educational publishers, and accessibility technology companies.

The organization provides teacher training, evaluation tools, and consultation, while partners handle programme implementation. Both parties collaborate on localization efforts, including translation and cultural adaptations. A pilot phase in 10–20 schools is recommended to evaluate effectiveness before broader implementation.

Investment and funding

As a for-profit social enterprise, Reach & Match focuses on SDG 4 with a mission to support inclusive education. Its revenue model relies on the kits, training or additional consultation services. Schools invest in the one-time programme setup fees, with minimal ongoing costs due to the durability and shareability of the kits. A pilot of 10 schools typically costs \$2,500 per school, covering materials, lesson plans, programme videos, and training. Funding sources include grants, government subsidies, and corporate sponsorships. Distributors retain a 30–35 percent margin, while

licensing partners operate on a royalty-based model to ensure sustainable revenue generation.

Support and network

Reach & Match provides partners with training, consultation, and ongoing support, and research and development efforts ensure continuous improvement. The organization fosters transparent, collaborative partnerships, enabling knowledge exchange and long-term programme sustainability.

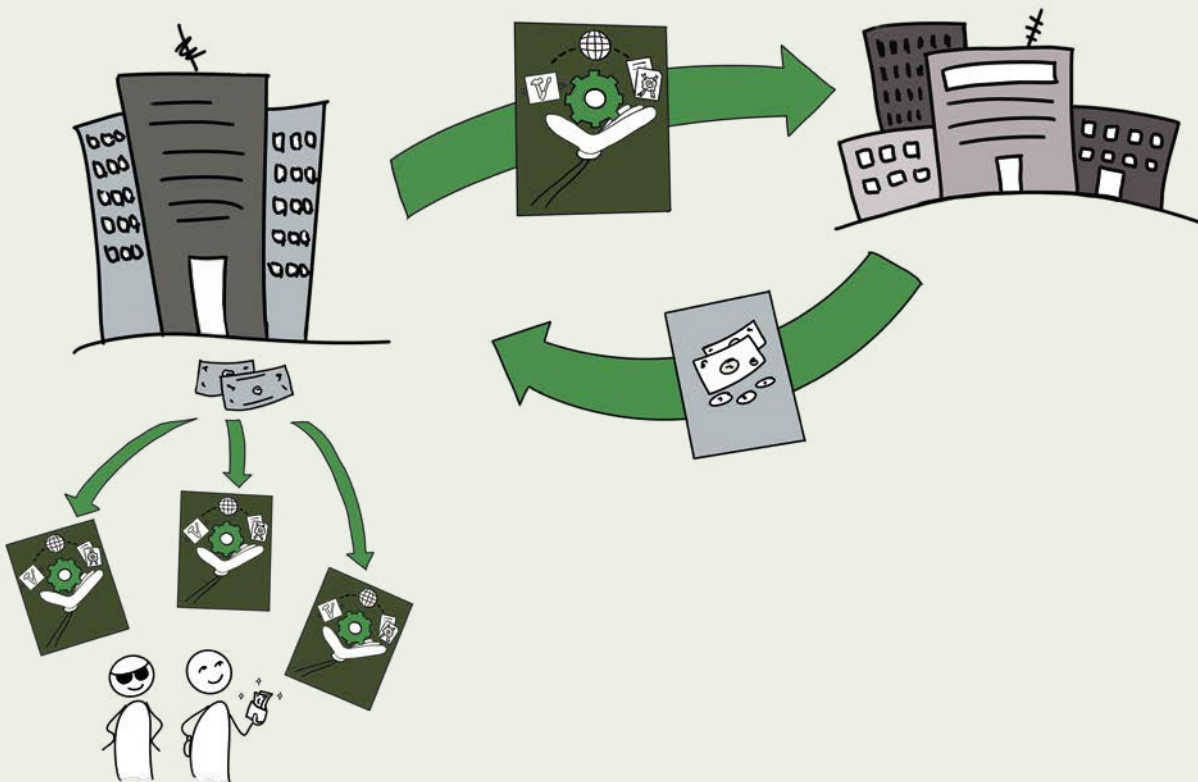
SCALING STRATEGY

- Reach & Match aims to reach 30,000 more children in 3–5 years.
- Preferred partners are distributors, licensing partners, as well as NGOs and government agencies.
- Distribution partners must have expertise in educational product distribution and networks in inclusive education.
- Distributors retain a 30–35 percent margin, while licensing partners operate on a royalty-based model
- Pilot projects ensure adaptation before broader implementation.

Strategy 4

ICT-based services for business and private users

Some organizations choose to scale by licensing their ICT platforms to companies and organizations, generating revenue that subsidizes free or discounted services for end-users with disabilities or less affluent partners.



When an ICT-based service is valuable to both end-users with disabilities and companies, this offers an excellent opportunity to scale quickly: Using the revenues from companies to finance the service to the end-users.

With this strategy, the scale-up organization offers licenses to use their ICT platform. Compared to a general licensing strategy, it has a unique feature that enables a different form of sharing and scaling: the service is valuable to both end-users with disabilities and companies (or any larger organizations) that can offer it to their paying customers or employees. Scale-up organizations combine this into one strategy whereby the revenues generated from the business service are used to offer it to private users for free or at a reduced cost, or to less affluent partners.

For the scale-up organizations, this offers an opportunity for rapid growth, investing the revenue stream into technology, marketing, and further expansion. A basic requirement to use this strategy is that the ICT platform needs little or no adaptation to be used in new countries, or that it can be done by the local adoptees or even by the users themselves.

Be My Eyes, which uses an app to connect blind and partially sighted users with sighted volunteers, has grown to 750,000 users and 8 million volunteers in just ten years. The service is free to users and is funded by licensing partners who offer the service to their customers and employees. These licensing partners are primarily well-known multinational companies that accelerate growth through their international presence and brand recognition. Partnerships with large technology companies that integrate the service into their offerings, such as Google and Microsoft, but also Ray-Ban, are another growth driver.

Incluyeme.com, the largest job portal for persons with disabilities in Latin America, also benefits from corporate partnerships that enable it to

scale internationally. More than 700 companies, including Accenture, IBM, Microsoft, Siemens, and Unilever, contribute to over 1,000 job postings per year.

Nagish, a start-up based in New York, has developed an AI-powered smartphone application that offers real-time audio-to-text and text-to-audio translation in six languages. To provide its services free of charge to eligible individuals, Nagish expands into new markets by leveraging government-funded programmes and collaborating with telecom providers, DPOs, or other qualified local partners.

SignLab has developed a digital sign language platform called Toleio and has more than 3 million users. SignLab focuses on countries with a large proportion of potential users, and uses different approaches to finance its distribution. These include the freemium model typical of apps, but also government funding and partnerships with foundations to offer free access in low-income countries.

TAI (Technology and Innovation) is an innovative non-governmental organization that leverages digital media, storytelling, and technology to produce educational content, including animations, comics, and radio dramas. This content is freely available, particularly benefiting young persons with disabilities. TAI employs two models for scaling up: social franchises and licensing partnerships. While licensing partnerships grant local partners more autonomy and facilitate rapid dissemination, TAI favors social franchises to maintain control and ensure that the social impact aligns with their mission.

An app using volunteers and AI to support visually impaired users in need

BE MY EYES / UNITED STATES

Be My Eyes, a Danish start-up headquartered in San Francisco, launched a free app in 2015 to connect blind and low-vision users with sighted volunteers or experts via video calls, offering AI-powered image descriptions and hands-free access with Ray-Ban Meta Glasses. By early 2025 it had over 750,000 users and 8 million volunteers.

Problems targeted

Blind and low-vision people often rely on a small network of friends and family to assist them with everyday tasks.

“Be My Eyes harnesses the power of tech and human generosity to enable people to live independently.”

Mike Buckley, CEO, Be My Eyes

Solution, innovation, and impact

Be My Eyes, originally a Danish start-up company with headquarters in San Francisco, California, provides a free mobile application for blind and low-vision individuals, available on iOS, Android, and Windows. Users can request visual assistance through live video calls with sighted volunteers, or use Be My AI for image-to-text translation. The app covers tasks ranging from reading instructions to navigating new spaces.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Be My Eyes has expanded globally, with a strong presence in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region.
- The app supports users in 180 languages across 150 countries.
- Major companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Hilton use the platform.

Over the past ten years, Be My Eyes has expanded globally and partnered with major companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Hilton Hotels & Resorts, which provide support for their blind or low-vision customers via the in-app Service Directory. Most recently, Be My Eyes was natively integrated into Ray-Ban Meta Glasses, with the goal of providing hands-free support for users.

Strategy and objectives

Be My Eyes aims to grow its user community while increasing its paying customer base among enterprises and government organizations. By offering its tools for free to blind and low-vision individuals, the organization ensures accessibility while also securing commercial partnerships to enhance user experiences. Be My Eyes intends to extend its solution to other sectors that require accessibility improvements, particularly in customer service and workplace settings. In 2024 the organization raised \$6.1 million through a Series A+ investment round, which will help expand its AI-driven enterprise products and support the global distribution of its free consumer products.

Scaling and implementation

Be My Eyes has scaled its solution globally, reaching nearly every country, with a strong presence in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region, and the organization is expanding further into regions such as the Middle East, with new partnerships with The Emirates Group and Zain Group. It is also focusing on growth in Brazil, China, and India. The platform's linguistic and cultural adaptability enables interactions in 180 languages across 150 countries, allowing users to connect with volunteers in their preferred language and time zone.

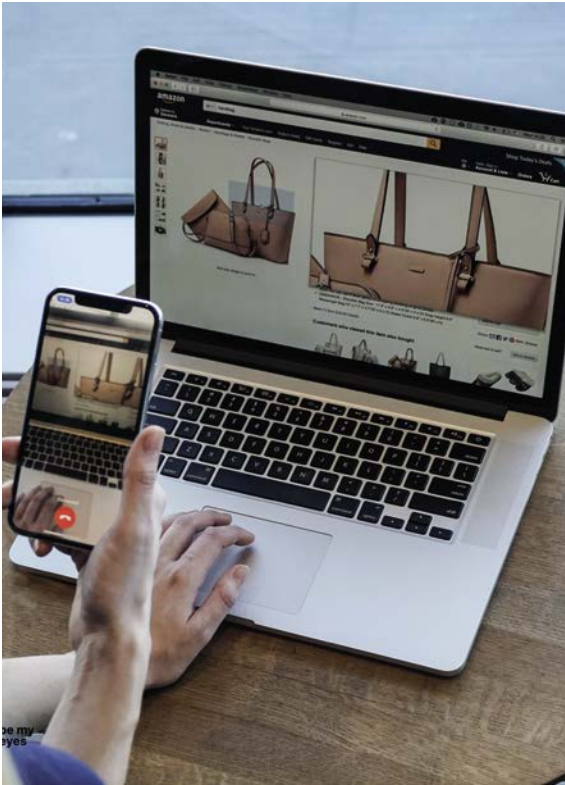
Partner requirements

Be My Eyes partners with companies and



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Be My Eyes partners with companies and government entities to improve accessibility for their blind and low-vision customers, citizens, or employees.

government entities to improve accessibility for their blind and low-vision customers, citizens, or employees. The organization operates on a (SaaS) licensing model, where partners use the software platform to enhance customer service or workplace accessibility. Integration with the software is straightforward, with basic setup taking less than 48 hours. Advanced integrations with platforms such as Salesforce and Zendesk are also available. Partners must demonstrate a commitment to accessibility and be willing to invest in inclusive solutions. Collaborations with disability organizations, advocacy groups, and accessibility-focused enterprises can facilitate the adoption of the platform.

Investment and funding

The implementation of Be My Eyes in new regions requires financial investment from local commercial or non-profit partners who license the platform. Be My Eyes charges a subscription fee for the in-app Service Directory, where organizations can answer calls from blind or low-vision customers. The subscription fee ranges from \$30,000 to \$350,000 per year, depending on the scope of deployment, while pilot tests typically cost \$5,000–10,000 per month. Pricing is influenced by such factors as regional deployment, customer interaction volume, and long-term impact.

Support and network

Be My Eyes provides extensive support to its partners, including training, marketing assistance, customer service improvement, and technology integration. Partners receive guidance on best practices for accessibility and how to implement them using the Be My Eyes platform. The company's collaborations with major tech firms ensure that partners have access to the latest accessibility tools. Additionally, Be My Eyes offers knowledge transfer through workshops, consultations, and resources to assist partners in adopting the platform effectively.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Be My Eyes aims to grow its user base and expand enterprise and government customers.
- Regions include the Asia-Pacific, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe, India, Middle East, and United States.
- Be My Eyes offers licensing agreements and comprehensive support services.
- The organization plans to scale through partnerships while providing free tools to blind users.
- In 2024, Be My Eyes raised \$6.1 million for market expansion and product adoption.

Inclusive job portal using a flexible and adaptive partnership strategy

INCLUYEME.COM / ARGENTINA

[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com), launched in Argentina in 2013, has developed the leading Latin American job portal for persons with disabilities, now active in 14 countries. By 2024 over 240,000 job seekers were registered and more than 700 companies were offering over 1,000 job postings annually. [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) also provides recruiter training and awareness workshops.

Problems targeted

In Latin America the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities is very high, but they are unable to use mainstream job portals.

Expansion is based on flexible partnerships. Agreements vary, including commercial and non-commercial collaborations, involving companies, NGOs, foundations, and educational Institutions.

Solution, innovation, and impact

[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com), launched in 2013, is the first job portal in Latin America dedicated to persons with disabilities, currently operating in 14 countries with +240,000 people with disabilities registered. It enables jobseekers to register, upload their resumes, and apply for positions while providing them with free training courses through its platform Capacitación Inclusiva. Since inception, it has helped over 3,500 individuals find employment.

Companies use the platform to post job listings and participate in workshops that foster inclusive work cultures. More than 700 companies,

including Accenture, IBM, Microsoft, Siemens, and Unilever, contribute to over 1,000 annual job postings. [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) also employs persons with disabilities and collaborates with NGOs to enhance its services. Since 2020 the organization has partnered with international entities to drive social and labour inclusion projects with an intersectional focus. It has been cash-flow positive since 2016, reinvesting proceeds to expand its reach and impact.

Strategy and objectives

By 2027, [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) aims to employ over 200 persons with disabilities per month and collaborate with 2,000 companies. Expansion plans target other emerging markets while strengthening operations within Latin America. Over the next three years it seeks to support 200 individuals monthly, grow its workforce to 50 employees, and train 150 people per month. Market research, local partnerships, and its experienced international team drive this strategy. Expansion beyond Latin America presents challenges, however, particularly in reaching candidates and companies in new countries.

Scaling and implementation

[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) has successfully expanded across 14 Latin American countries, including Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Its model has facilitated employment for over 3,000 persons with disabilities and trained more than 10,000 individuals. The organization leverages its regional expertise and collaborations to execute social inclusion initiatives effectively. Its headquarters in Buenos Aires coordinates international expansion and adaptation to new labour markets.

Partner requirements

Expansion into new markets is independently driven by [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) but supported by flexible partnerships. Agreements vary, including

FACTS & FIGURES

- [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) operates in 14 Latin American countries, supporting inclusive hiring.
- Over 3,500 persons with disabilities have secured jobs through the platform.
- More than 700 companies post over 1,000 job opportunities annually.



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[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) enables jobseekers to register, upload their resumes, and apply for positions while providing training through its platform Capacitación Inclusiva.

commercial and non-commercial collaborations, involving companies, NGOs, foundations, and educational institutions. Partners contribute local expertise, regulatory guidance, technology solutions, funding, and networking support. Training programmes are tailored to different partnerships. Bootcamps, offered in collaboration with universities, provide certified, cohort-based learning, while Massive Open Online Courses offer self-paced learning. Universities, such as Argentina's National Technological University, provide academic support and certification for persons with disabilities.

Investment and funding

[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) does not have a standardized cost structure for market entry; costs depend on operational setup, staffing, technology adaptation, and marketing. Ongoing expenses include salaries, technology maintenance, and programme delivery. Funding is derived from revenue-generating services and non-reimbursable grants. For companies, [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) provides structured assessments and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) strategy development, employability services, accessibility guidance, communication support, and community engagement.

Organizations must undergo fee-based awareness training before service implementation. Training and registration for job seekers with disabilities are free, funded by client companies or grants from entities such as [Google.org](https://www.google.org), the Canadian Cooperation Agency, and IDB Lab.

Support and network

[Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) supports partners with access to data, best practices, and participation in regionally funded projects. It facilitates impact reporting, visibility, and industry networking, fostering knowledge transfer through training programmes, workshops, and e-learning courses. Partnerships undergo careful evaluation to ensure alignment with the social model of disability and genuine inclusion efforts. Awareness training is a prerequisite, and all collaboration models include strategies to mitigate risks and maximize impact.

SCALING STRATEGY

- By 2027, [Incluyeme.com](https://www.incluyeme.com) aims to employ 200 persons with disabilities per month and work with 2,000 companies.
- Expansion beyond Latin America will be guided by market research and partnerships.
- Preferred partners include companies, NGOs, and universities offering local expertise.
- Partners must provide regulatory support, funding, and access to networks.
- A key challenge is expanding the candidate database in new regions.

An AI-based app translating conversations into text messages in real time

NAGISH / UNITED STATES

Nagish, a New York-based start-up, has developed an innovative AI-powered smartphone app for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Nagish app provides real-time audio-to-text and text-to-audio translation in six languages. In 2024 tens of thousands users communicated via the app in the United States as well as in Canada and Israel.

Problems targeted

Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals often face significant communication barriers, especially when making phone calls, hindering their participation in daily activities and limiting access to essential services.

“Today, Nagish is used by thousands of people for anything from ordering pizza to landing a job.”

Tomer Aharoni, CEO and Co-Founder, Nagish

Solution, innovation, and impact

Nagish, a New York-based start-up, has developed a smartphone app designed for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. The app uses an AI-driven captioning engine to convert audio into real-time, highly accurate text and vice versa in six languages: English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. The app requires no special equipment or training; users simply download the app and begin making calls.

Nagish is free for users, funded through government programmes, and includes a future enterprise add-on that will enable employers to interview and hire deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. This feature can be combined with any video conferencing tools. Comcast, a large U.S. media company, is already using the add-on as part of its beta testing phase. In 2024, Nagish had tens of thousands active users across the U.S., Canada, and Israel. It has been certified by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission to provide relay services, becoming the first U.S. provider to rely solely on AI. Nagish has raised \$16 million in venture capital to expand into new markets, add more languages, and further develop accessible communication tools.

Strategy and objectives

Nagish plans to expand into new markets by leveraging government funded programmes in developed countries to provide services free of charge to eligible individuals. In countries without similar funding, Nagish plans to partner with telecom companies or to provide its services through a subscription model. This model is already in use in select markets and will be expanded.

To meet regional needs, Nagish continuously enhances its platform by integrating both external and in-house-developed speech-to-text and text-to-speech technologies, thus ensuring the app can be tailored to the preferences and needs of different regions.

Scaling and implementation

While the U.S. market is growing rapidly, Nagish services in Canada and Israel have not yet been monetized, as these were not primary focus areas. However, experiences in these countries have provided valuable insights for future market strategies. Initially, Nagish will focus on regions with large deaf and hard-of-hearing populations, particularly

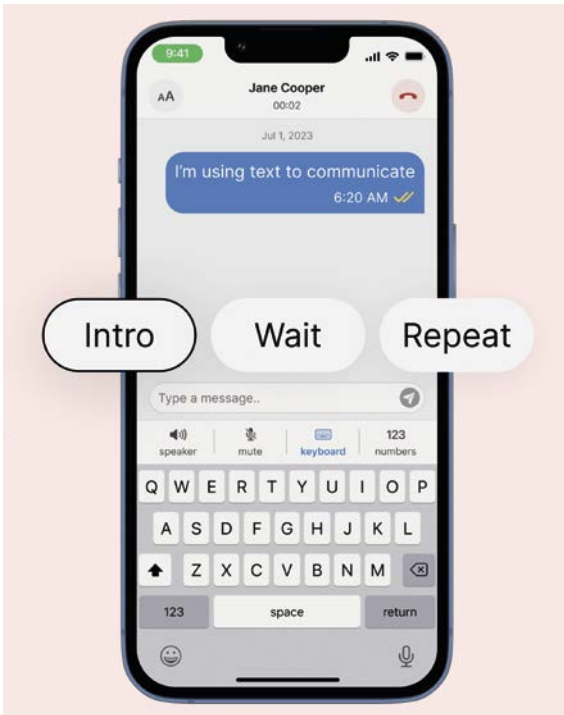
FACTS & FIGURES

- Nagish's app supports six languages: English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.
- Tens of thousands users in the U.S., Canada, and Israel are using Nagish's services.
- Nagish has raised \$16 million in venture capital.



Mai Tannen

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Nagish seeks distribution partners and telecom companies to scale its solution globally. Ideal partners should have expertise in the healthcare and communication sectors and experience with government programmes.

those with over 5 million people in need of accessible communication tools.

Partner requirements

Nagish seeks distribution partners and telecom companies to scale its solution globally. Ideal partners should have expertise in the healthcare and communication sectors and experience with government programmes. They should be able to navigate regulatory challenges and manage service distribution at scale.

In regions lacking government funding, telecom companies are crucial partners, as they can drive market adoption by providing tailored services to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Partnership models are flexible. Nagish will manage technology integration and training, while local partners, such as telecom companies, will handle marketing, sales, and regulatory compliance.

Investment and funding

Market entry costs are typically borne by distribution partners or telecom companies, which are responsible for promoting the service and for ensuring compliance with local regulations. In developed markets, government funding may subsidize some costs, but in underdeveloped regions, telecom partners may need to assume a larger financial role.

Nagish's revenue-sharing model allows partners to offset initial investments. The specific

revenue split varies based on market size, local conditions, and the level of investment from both parties. This model ensures mutual benefits for Nagish and its partners.

Support and network

Nagish offers comprehensive support to its partners, including marketing strategies, training, and assistance with navigating regulatory frameworks. Training materials and sessions ensure that partners can distribute and operate the service effectively. The company also maintains ongoing relationships with partners, providing continuous support to ensure the service's successful operation and growth.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Nagish aims to expand through government subsidies, partnerships, or subscription model.
- Targets regions have a population of over 5 million people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The company plans to offer services free to eligible individuals.
- Nagish will manage technology integration and training.
- Local partners will handle marketing, sales, and regulatory compliance.

Teaching sign language with videos, Artificial Intelligence, and gamification

SIGNLAB – TOLEIO / NORWAY

SignLab, a Norwegian social business, has developed Toleio, a digital sign language learning platform that uses videos, Artificial Intelligence, and gamification to make learning more effective and responsive. SignLab has expanded its solutions to more than ten countries, home to some 75 percent of the world's deaf population.

Problems targeted

For families of deaf and hard-of-hearing children, learning sign language can be expensive and inaccessible.

SignLab partners with local sign language organizations and teachers to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula for each new language.

Solution, innovation, and impact

SignLab, a Norwegian social business, developed Toleio, a digital sign language learning platform. Available online and offline through a smartphone app or desktop site, Toleio's lessons cover everyday topics such as food, household objects, and school. Videos convey the three-dimensional nature of signs, and gamification keeps learning

engaging. Artificial Intelligence adapts lessons to address weak spots and to reinforce signs at risk of being forgotten. Since launching in 2019, SignLab has expanded its solutions to more than ten countries, home to some 75 percent of the world's deaf population as well as their families and communities. Courses in American, Australian, Brazilian, Chinese, French, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, and Norwegian sign languages are all available, with more planned for Africa and Asia.

Strategy and objectives

Over the next three to five years SignLab aims to expand its reach tenfold, with a target of educating 30 million learners. To achieve this, the organization will focus on scaling in key countries such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, while expanding into Bangladesh, Nigeria, and other major African nations. Additional target markets include several European countries as well as Argentina, Japan, Mexico, and Viet Nam.

SignLab employs a variety of financing models, such as government funding, subscription services, freemium options, or partnerships with foundations to offer free access in low-income countries. Its expansion strategy depends on generating revenue in Australia, Europe, and North America to fund growth in the Global South. The company's agile strategy allows it to quickly introduce an initial version of its app in new markets, then adjusting the version based on feedback to ensure adaptability to local cultural and linguistic contexts. Although the focus is on sign language education, the model could be expanded to other forms of inclusive learning.

Scaling and implementation

SignLab has expanded its platform worldwide through social media, business-to-business (B2B) partnerships, and collaborations with local deaf communities. Today, the organization is the largest provider of sign language education in virtually

FACTS & FIGURES

- SignLab's platform has over 3 million users, mastering more than 60 million signs.
- It has expanded to 10+ countries, covering 75 percent of the global deaf population.
- Courses are available in multiple sign languages, with plans for further expansion in Africa and Asia.



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Toleio's lessons cover everyday topics such as food, household objects, and school. Videos convey the three-dimensional nature of signs, and gamification keeps learning engaging.

every market other than the United States. With over 3 million users globally, learners have collectively mastered more than 60 million signs.

Partner requirements

SignLab partners with local sign language organizations and teachers to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula for each new language. To scale effectively, the organization seeks two types of partnerships:

Implementation partners adapt sign language programmes to local markets, localize content, and engage with the deaf community.

Project funding partners provide financial backing and strategic guidance to ensure programmes are sustainable and accessible.

Investment and funding

Expanding into new markets requires investment in localization, app development, and strategic partnerships. SignLab covers operating costs, while partners are responsible for translating and filming content in their national sign language.

The organization collaborates with commercial partners, such as Yomma in Germany, B.S.L. Training in the United Kingdom, and ElioZ in France, which receive a percentage of platform profits. Additionally, philanthropic organizations, NGOs, and funding bodies with an interest in education and social inclusion contribute financial support.

SignLab has received funding from organizations such as NORAD and the Special Olympics as well as from philanthropists and various government bodies to support its expansion into developing countries.

Support and network

SignLab provides ongoing support to partners in marketing, training, and technical assistance; and it maintains an active presence in each country through social media, B2B partnerships, and collaborations with organizations supporting the deaf community and parents of deaf children.

SCALING STRATEGY

- SignLab aims to educate 30 million learners in the next 3–5 years.
- The organization scales using government funding, subscriptions, and freemium models.
- Implementation partners localize content and engage with deaf communities.
- Financial partners provide backing and strategic guidance to ensure long-term sustainability.
- SignLab has received funding to support its expansion into developing countries.

Empowering youth through storytelling and digital media

TAI TANZANIA / TANZANIA

Tai Tanzania develops inclusive educational content using storytelling and digital media to support children with disabilities. Its animations, comics, and radio dramas have impacted over 5 million people through traditional and online platforms. With expansion into Kenya and plans for Ghana, Tai Tanzania aims to scale globally.

Problems targeted

Children with disabilities are often marginalized and excluded from accessing opportunities like education, especially in remote areas.

Implementing the model in a new country requires initial investment in content localization, digital infrastructure, and training programmes. Tai provides the core content, brand support, and ongoing training in return for royalties or license fees.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Tai Tanzania is a creative Tanzanian NGO providing non-formal education to youth and persons with disabilities since 2013. It uses digital media, storytelling, and technology to produce educational content in the form of animations, comics, and radio dramas. Engaging youth and individuals with disabilities, its materials focus on autism, albinism, blindness, dyslexia, and physical disabilities. Content is freely accessible online via YouTube,

SoundCloud, and downloadable resources, with characters such as Njaro, a young innovator with albinism, and Nemo, a blind mathematics prodigy.

Through school and community outreach, Tai has directly impacted over 7,000 students, including 900 with disabilities, and over 5 million people through traditional and online platforms. Tai's materials are available in over 40 schools through partnerships with Asante Africa, Camara Education, and Toa Nafasi. Plans include adapting content into English and developing a mobile app.

Strategy and objectives

Tai Tanzania aims to expand globally by localizing content for different languages and cultures while aligning with local education systems. Scaling efforts focus on licensing agreements or social franchising, balancing expansion speed with quality control. A social franchise allows for close oversight but requires slower growth, while licensing enables faster dissemination with less direct control. The chosen approach depends on resources, partner goals, and strategic alignment.

Tai Tanzania currently prioritizes expansion into Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia, with potential entry into Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Scaling and implementation

Tai Tanzania has already expanded into Kenya through licensing and dissemination partnerships and is currently working on initiating further partnerships in Ghana. Currently, Tai Tanzania serves some 528,000 international users alongside more than 646,000 in Tanzania. Growth is driven by strong media collaborations, national television exposure, and social media outreach. Community engagement programmes have reached thousands of students with disabilities, increasing demand for its resources across different regions.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Tai Tanzania's content has reached over 5 million people via traditional and online platforms.
- More than 40 schools use Tai's educational materials through key partnerships.
- Tai Tanzania has already expanded into Kenya, serving over 528,000 users internationally.



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Tai uses digital media, storytelling, and technology to produce educational content in the form of animations, comics, and radio dramas. Its materials focus on autism, albinism, blindness, dyslexia, and physical disabilities.

Partner requirements

Tai collaborates with local partners responsible for content localization, marketing, distribution, and technological infrastructure. Partners must comply with local education policies, ensure cultural relevance, and sustain financial and operational management. Tai provides intellectual property protection, content creation, quality assurance, training, and global networking. Academic institutions support research and impact assessments.

Investment and funding

Implementing Tai's model in a new country requires initial investment in content localization, digital infrastructure, and training programmes. Estimated costs range from \$200,000 to \$500,000 for smaller launches and up to \$1.5 million for larger expansions. The primary financial responsibility generally falls on the licensee or franchisee, which covers local content adaptation, technology set-up, and marketing efforts. Tai, as the licensor, provides the core content, brand support, and ongoing training in return for royalties or license fees. These costs are typically shared by a combination of partners, including donors, NGOs, and educational institutions, with Tai also relying on grants, donations, and sponsorship from philanthropic organizations, governments, and corporate sponsors. Revenue from the sale of printed comic books supplements funding efforts.

Support and network

Tai Tanzania facilitates knowledge transfer through structured training, digital resources, and collaborative research with academic institutions. It maintains continuous engagement with partners through online exchanges, joint initiatives, and knowledge-sharing forums. While in-person participation in exchange programmes is encouraged, digital communication ensures accessibility for all partners.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Tai Tanzania aims to expand into at least seven new African countries.
- The organization scales through licensing agreements and social franchising.
- Preferred partners include NGOs, schools, and education ministries.
- Partners must ensure content localization, financial sustainability, and compliance.
- A Ghana office is planned to strengthen Tai's West African presence.

Strategy 5

Low-cost licensing of trainings and services to social service providers

Some organizations choose to partner with NGOs and smaller companies, sharing their specialized methods through training systems, often emphasizing affordability, open knowledge exchange, and adaptability to local contexts.



The strategy requires that the scale-up organization can ‘translate’ its method into a training system, which local partners can then use and adapt to their country’s context. It usually consists of online courses, train-the-trainer models, and training materials.

These strategies for scaling up have been developed by NGOs and DPOs accustomed to working with limited budgets and the necessity to be resourceful. Their local partners are typically NGOs or small organizations.

NGOs and DPOs have often developed specific, expertise-intensive methods to improve or revolutionize existing service provision. Services become more affordable, are professionalized, more evidence-based, and more respectful of individual needs.

These strategies are applicable for a variety of themes, including early childhood intervention, teaching, vocational training, job creation, combating sexual abuse and all forms of bullying and discrimination, and providing services in remote areas.

The strategy requires that the scale-up organization can 'translate' its method into a training system, which local partners can then use and adapt to their country's needs.

The training system usually consists of online courses, train-the-trainer models, training materials, and other training techniques. Local partners are commonly NGOs that understand and appreciate the impact of these innovative solutions, or training institutes servicing a multitude of interested parties in the target country.

Mission: low-cost and low-barrier

Some scale-up organizations even support low-barrier forms of knowledge sharing for free, making their innovation available to as many beneficiaries as possible as their top priority.

Amar Seva Sangam is a small regional NGO in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which has developed an Early Intervention Technology Leveraged programme using an app that is scalable and cost-effective. As a scale-up organization, Amar

Seva Sangam relies on partnerships, particularly with other NGOs, which pay a low, user-based license fee.

Enable India has developed Enable Vaani, a voice-based social network that provides vital information to marginalized communities without the need for Internet access. It is made available on an open-source basis, sharing tools and expertise without financial exchange. The solution can also be run completely independently by a local partner.

NLR Indonesia is part of an international alliance. Its programme My Body Is Mine educates children and young people with leprosy and other disabilities, aged 10 to 18 years, about sexual and reproductive health and rights in schools and health centres. Developed as a national project, the preferred partners are other NGOs, and the costs for local partners are low. NLR Indonesia even funds and passes on the basic teaching materials package at cost price, with no ongoing fees.

Jaipur Foot (BMVSS) is an NGO based in Jaipur, India, that provides free, high quality prostheses to persons with disabilities. The technology is provided as open source and the sites in other countries are managed by local partners who have been trained and continue to receive technical and material support to develop a skilled workforce for long-term prosthetic services.

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is a private research university in Rochester, New York. In 2018, RIT launched the Deaf World Around You (WAY) platform, an open-source, web-based library of multilingual signed stories. Preferred partners include DPOs for the Deaf, NGOs, government agencies, literacy groups, and educational institutions.

App-based early intervention therapy in rural communities

AMAR SEVA SANGAM / INDIA

Amar Seva Sangam is an NGO in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu focused on supporting persons with disabilities in rural areas. The organization has developed an Early Intervention Technology Leveraged programme using an app that is scalable and cost-effective. It focuses on involving parents by educating, training, and guiding them.

Problems targeted

According to UNICEF, there are 93–150 million children with disabilities globally, and 90 percent of children living in low and middle-income countries do not have access to child development and rehabilitation services.

Scaling efforts require committed partners with at least one qualified rehabilitation professional; sufficient funding for setup, training, and licensing; and the ability to train community workers.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Amar Seva Sangam has developed an efficient, high-quality early intervention programme using the GPS-enabled, cloud-based Enabling Inclusion app (EI® app). This app streamlines case management by connecting community workers with rehabilitation specialists, enabling real-time monitoring and effective early intervention services. The

EI® app supports individualized case management, goal setting, progress tracking, scheduling, and reporting. It works through both tele-rehab and on-site services, improving children's functional abilities, reducing family stress, increasing income, and promoting school enrolment. Research conducted in collaboration with the University of Toronto, McGill University, and the Harvard Centre for the Developing Child has shown that, among other effects, the EI® model improved school enrolment from 70 to 85 percent, and resulted in a 75 percent cost savings compared to urban centre-based programmes. Amar Seva Sangam has licensed the EI® app and provided training to other government and non-governmental organizations across various states in India and in Ethiopia to replicate, adapt, and refine the model to suit local contexts, reaching more than 4,000 children and 8,500 parents.

Strategy and objectives

Amar Seva Sangam aims to become a global leader in affordable and effective rehabilitation solutions, targeting 100,000 beneficiaries and improving the economic conditions of 200,000 families by 2030. The organization primarily intends to achieve this goal by forming licensing partnerships with NGOs, governments, and corporations. Amar Seva Sangam is also open to alternative models, including knowledge partnerships, where they share expertise through training and consultations. While their core focus is on low and middle-income countries, particularly in South Asia and Southeast Asia, their model can be adapted for other regions, depending on the demand for rehabilitation services.

Scaling and implementation

Amar Seva Sangam has already made strides in scaling its programme internationally, notably in Ethiopia, through collaborations with the University of Gondar, Light for the World, and World Vision.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Over 4,000 children and 8,500 parents have benefited from the Enabling Inclusion (EI®) app.
- The EI® model improved school enrolment from 70 to 85 percent and reduced costs by 75 percent.
- The programme has been successfully licensed and adapted in India and Ethiopia.



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The EI® app supports individualized case management, goal setting, progress tracking, scheduling, and reporting. It works through both tele-rehab and on-site services, improving children’s functional abilities

Through these partnerships, the organization implemented a community-based rehabilitation programme using the EI® app across ten kebeles (the smallest administrative units in Ethiopia).

Partner requirements

Scaling efforts require committed partners with at least one qualified rehabilitation professional; sufficient funding for setup, training, and licensing; and the ability to train community workers. Partner organizations must enrol a minimum of 200 participants for two years, supported by two project officers. The programme allows customization based on specific disabilities and operational models, including community-based, clinic-based, or mobile service delivery.

Investment and funding

The Enabling Inclusion licensing fee includes a setup and training cost of \$2,000 per organization, with training accommodations at \$25 per person per day. Annual server maintenance costs \$1,500 for up to 400 children, while the license fee is \$2.50 per child per month. An optional assessment tool, Wee-FIM, costs \$1,000 per year per project officer. Income can be generated from possible additional service fees from parents and from public grants or private charities. In India the service is primarily funded by corporate social responsibility contributions, with additional funding from state governments and international grant

agencies such as Grand Challenges Canada and Handi-Care International Canada.

Support and network

Amar Seva Sangam has established a Centre of Excellence in Development and Rehabilitation for Children with Disabilities to scale the impact of its model and technology by building partnerships with NGOs, governments, and corporations. The centre includes capable training personnel and materials, a robust research team for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and a dedicated support team for scaling impact transfer activities.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Amar Seva Sangam aims to reach 100,000 beneficiaries by 2030.
- The organization focuses on licensing partnerships with NGOs.
- The primary focus is on South and Southeast Asia.
- The model is adaptable for other regions and different types of service delivery.
- Partners must have qualified rehabilitation professionals, sufficient funding, and the ability to train community workers.

Mobile phone-based information service about accessible opportunities

ENABLE INDIA – ENABLE VAANI / INDIA

Enable India, a Bangalore-based non-profit, developed Enable Vaani, a voice-based social network providing vital information to persons with disabilities without requiring Internet access. Operating in multiple languages in India, the platform receives 100,000+ calls monthly and has been replicated in Ethiopia.

Problems targeted

Persons with disabilities living in rural or marginalized areas have little or no access to information that could help improve their lives.

Enable India seeks partnerships especially with CSR organizations, NGOs, and technology providers within target countries. Ideal partners have strong networks within the disability sector and are capable of content moderation, user engagement, and programme evaluation.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Enable India, a non-profit organization based in Bangalore, India, operates in 28 states and has developed Enable Vaani, a voice-based social network providing information via mobile phones without requiring Internet access. NGOs, companies, persons with disabilities, parents, and other enablers contribute voice messages, which are moderated and published by Enable India staff.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Enable Vaani operates in multiple Indian languages, including Kannada, Hindi, Bangla and Tamil.
- The platform receives over 100,000 calls per month, providing continuous engagement.
- Enable Vaani was successfully replicated in Ethiopia as Minch in 2021.

The platform primarily shares employment opportunities, but also provides content on education, training, workplace solutions, life skills, government schemes, and inspirational stories. Users can respond by recording messages. Initially launched as Namma Vaani in Kannada, spoken in the state of Karnataka in southern India, the service expanded in 2017 with Hamari Vaani in Hindi. By 2024 it supported multiple languages, including Bangla and Tamil, to cater to India's linguistic diversity. The platform receives over 100,000 monthly calls, ensuring continuous community engagement. In 2021 the model was replicated in Ethiopia as Minch, demonstrating its potential for international expansion.

Strategy and objectives

Enable India follows an open source scaling model, sharing tools and expertise without financial exchange. Its aim is to reach underserved communities in regions with limited Internet access, focusing on persons with disabilities, women, tribal communities, and marginalized populations. The expansion strategy considers mobile access, and socio-economic conditions to ensure effective adoption. The platform integrates both data-based (WhatsApp, web apps) and non-data channels (IVR, SMS) to enhance accessibility. Alongside technology deployment, Enable India invests in awareness, capacity-building, and feedback mechanisms to foster an inclusive communication ecosystem.

Scaling and implementation

The platform's evolution from a single language and minimal user base to four languages and over 100,000 monthly calls in India serves as a model for replication. The Ethiopian replication of the platform demonstrated that local partners can operate the service independently. Expansion is more effective in countries with supportive policies, particularly for toll-free numbers. In urban



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The platform primarily shares employment opportunities, but also provides content on education, training, workplace solutions, life skills, government schemes, and inspirational stories. Users can respond by recording messages.

areas with high smartphone usage and Internet connectivity, an app-based version may be more practical than IVR.

Partner requirements

Enable India seeks partnerships especially with CSR organizations, NGOs, and technology providers within target countries. Ideal partners have strong networks within the disability sector and are capable of content moderation, user engagement, and programme evaluation. Enable India oversees strategic partnerships, training, and knowledge transfer, while Gram Vaani, the technology provider, maintains the IVR platform, with potential support from local telecom providers. Local partners handle content moderation, customization, and engagement with key stakeholders. The platform does not require direct technology transfer; it can be hosted locally or managed through a cloud-based model, with on-ground implementation led by the local partner.

Investment and funding

Enable Vaani operates as a service initiative rather than a revenue-generating project. Though not profit-driven, it requires funding for platform management, call charges, and expansion. Local partners secure funding for international scaling, with Enable India assisting in identifying potential funders and pitching proposals. Costs include initial setup fees, platform maintenance, call charges, staff salaries, and scaling expenses, varying by

country. The setup cost in India is approximately INR 150,000 (\$1,700), with monthly maintenance of INR 146,000 (\$1,672). Enable India supports financial sustainability by guiding partners in securing funding through CSR grants and other sources.

Support and network

Enable Vaani provides expertise, guidance, and hands-on support for local implementation, equipping them with tools and strategies to engage grassroots communities and to foster inclusivity and empowerment for persons with disabilities.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Enable India aims to expand access to information for marginalized communities.
- The open-source model allows partners to use tools without financial exchange.
- Preferred partners include CSR organizations, NGOs, and tech providers.
- Partners must moderate content, engage users, and support scaling efforts.
- IVR-based services suit regions with toll-free policies, while apps work better in cities.

Providing affordable prosthetic solutions in 43 countries worldwide

JAIPUR FOOT (BMVSS) / INDIA

The Jaipur Foot (BMVSS) based in Jaipur, India, provides free, high-performance prosthetic aids to individuals with disabilities. Its innovations, including the Jaipur Foot and Jaipur Knee, have improved mobility for over 2.2 million people worldwide. The organization has scaled operations to 43 countries.

Problems targeted

Persons with physical disabilities in rural areas of low-income countries are often unable to access assistive aids.

While the Government of India covers operational expenses, local partners must provide basic infrastructure such as space, electricity, water, translators, volunteers, and logistical support. Additionally, they are responsible for patient registration and coordination.

Solution, innovation, and impact

The Jaipur Foot Organization – BMVSS (Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti) is an NGO headquartered in Jaipur, India, providing free prosthetic aids and appliances to individuals with disabilities, particularly impoverished amputees in rural areas. The organization offers a variety of assistance and has also designed its own prosthetic

limbs, including the Jaipur Foot and the Jaipur Knee. These are affordable, high-performance, and robust alternatives to expensive assistive aids previously in use. The Jaipur Foot is an inexpensive, water-resistant, and quick-to-fit below-knee prosthetic. The Jaipur Knee is a nylon artificial knee joint, developed in partnership with Stanford University, that mimics natural movement.

By 2024, Jaipur Foot expanded from 23 to 33 branches within India and from 27 to 43 countries globally. It has provided over 2.2 million prostheses, orthoses, and assistive aids in India and more than 44,600 devices internationally.

Strategy and objectives

Jaipur Foot operates under the Government of India's 'India for Humanity' initiative, which funds its international activities. With expansion to 43 countries, the organization has paused further scaling to maintain service quality. Its primary objective is to make prosthetic services accessible and affordable in developing regions, which it achieves by building local capacity and encouraging partners to establish permanent prosthetic centres. The open-source technology facilitates knowledge transfer and enables local organizations to become self-sufficient in prosthetic care.

Scaling and implementation

Jaipur Foot employs two models for international expansion: permanent centres and short-term outreach camps. Permanent centres, established in countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Nepal, Mauritius, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Tanzania, are operated by local partners with continued technical and material support from Jaipur Foot. Only countries with local organizations that have dynamic leadership, trained manpower, and adequate resources have been able to set up centres. Outreach camps provide temporary relief in areas lacking prosthetic services, often in

FACTS & FIGURES

- Jaipur Foot has provided over 2.2 million prosthetic and assistive devices.
- The organization operates in 43 countries, with 33 branches in India.
- Key innovations include the Jaipur Foot and Jaipur Knee, offering affordable mobility solutions.



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The Jaipur Foot and the Jaipur Knee are affordable, high-performance, and robust alternatives to expensive assistive aids. The Jaipur Foot is an inexpensive, water-resistant, and quick-to-fit below-knee prosthetic. The Jaipur Knee is a nylon artificial knee joint.

conflict-affected regions. These camps are only feasible in countries without strict regulations, as the Jaipur Foot technology is tried and tested but does not conform to international standards.

Partner requirements

Local partners are expected to initiate a project by hosting an initial outreach camp, where Jaipur Foot sets up a temporary workshop to fit artificial limbs on-site.

Partners should have a significant number of amputees with unmet needs, with each camp typically serving 500–600 patients. While the Government of India covers operational expenses, local partners must provide basic infrastructure such as space, electricity, water, translators, volunteers, and logistical support. Additionally, they are responsible for patient registration and coordination. Building local capacity is a core objective, and the open-source technology allows partners to develop skilled manpower for long-term prosthetic services.

Investment and funding

The estimated initial investment for implementing Jaipur Foot's model in a new country is around \$50,000, excluding space and manpower costs. These funds cover infrastructure, raw materials, and initial operational expenses. Given that Jaipur Foot operates as a charitable organization, it supports partners who align with its mission of providing affordable prosthetic devices, often to

individuals from lower economic backgrounds. Because income from services may not generate significant revenue, the organization may seek external support through governmental or NGO funding to help cover the financial needs of setting up operations in new countries.

Support and network

Jaipur Foot's open-source approach ensures that knowledge and technology are accessible, promoting self-sufficiency. Partnerships are reinforced through continuous engagement, knowledge exchange, and collaborative initiatives, fostering long-term sustainability and expanding access to life-changing prosthetic solutions worldwide.

SCALING STRATEGY

- The goal is to expand prosthetic access in developing regions.
- Scaling is achieved through permanent centres and outreach camps.
- Preferred partners are local organizations with strong leadership and resources.
- Partners must provide infrastructure, manpower, and logistical support.
- The model is open-source, enabling local capacity-building and sustainability.

Sexual and reproductive education for youth with disabilities

NLR INDONESIA – MY BODY IS MINE / INDONESIA

NLR Indonesia, based in Jakarta, developed the My Body Is Mine (MBIM) programme in 2018, providing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education to children and youth with disabilities. With impactful global expansion plans, the programme aims to raise awareness through both online and offline platforms, addressing SRHR service gaps.

Problems targeted

Children and youth with disabilities often lack information about their sexual and reproductive health due to stigma and the lack of sexual education and services.

NLR Indonesia seeks partnerships with NGOs working in the fields of disability, children and youth, health, and government. Partners will receive training and technical support to integrate SRHR education into their existing programmes.

Solution, innovation, and impact

In 2018, NLR Indonesia, an NGO based in Jakarta, developed the My Body Is Mine (MBIM) programme to provide sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education to children and youth with leprosy and other disabilities, aged 10 to 18, in schools and healthcare centres. As part of the programme, NLR developed educational teaching

manuals and tools, such as images and videos, which teachers, healthcare workers, and parents use to address topics of sexual and reproductive health with young people. Despite disruptions caused by COVID-19, prior training helped participants to maintain hygiene and to report cases of sexual violence. Between 2019 and 2022, 182 children and young persons with disabilities in four districts of Indonesia received SRHR education.

Strategy and objectives

NLR Indonesia seeks to scale its impact by serving as a learning hub for SRHR education for children and youth with disabilities, including those affected by leprosy. The organization aims to expand awareness through both online and offline platforms globally. To successfully implement programmes in new countries, NLR Indonesia prioritizes contexts where access to SRHR services for children and youth with disabilities is recognized as a challenge. Prospective countries should demonstrate a commitment to addressing service gaps and policy improvements. Pilot projects will be considered in countries with similar contexts before large-scale implementation.

Scaling and implementation

Although NLR Indonesia has yet to expand its SRHR programmes internationally, it is preparing for expansion as part of the NLR International alliance, which operates in Brazil, India, Mozambique, and Nepal.

NLR India has expressed interest in incorporating SRHR education into its initiatives, with next steps involving collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and disability-focused institutions. Brazil is also under consideration due to its high leprosy incidence and existing disparities in reproductive health services. Both countries face significant challenges related to social inequality and healthcare access, particularly in rural areas. However, their policy landscapes and ongoing

FACTS & FIGURES

- The MBIM programme educated 182 children and youth with disabilities between 2019 and 2022.
- The programme was implemented in four districts of Indonesia, reaching local schools and healthcare centres.
- NLR is expanding its SRHR education globally, focusing on Brazil and India, among others.



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NLR developed educational teaching manuals and tools, such as images and videos, which teachers, healthcare workers, and parents use to address topics of sexual and reproductive health with young people.

public health efforts create opportunities for evidence-based SRHR education tailored to young persons with disabilities.

Partner requirements

NLR Indonesia seeks partnerships with NGOs working in the fields of disability, children and youth, health, and government. Partners will receive training and technical support to integrate SRHR education into their existing programmes. Cultural compatibility is assessed through research and engagement with local stakeholders to ensure the programme aligns with community norms and values. Local partners play a key role in implementing activities, adapting teaching methods, and evaluating programme outcomes.

Partners are encouraged to procure educational materials from NLR Indonesia, such as teaching guides and instructional dolls, which are available at production and shipping costs. These resources enhance SRHR education for children and youth with disabilities.

Investment and funding

Programme costs vary based on location, project scale, and implementation needs. Initial expenses cover local context analysis, training, and material procurement. A basic package of teaching materials costs between \$75 and \$100.

NLR Indonesia funds training and facilitator honorariums, while local partners or external donors typically cover costs related to logistics, venue rentals, and translation of materials.

Financial sustainability is ensured through long-term funding agreements with governments, foundations, and external donors.

Support and network

NLR Indonesia provides partners with technical support in financing, human resources, marketing, evaluation, and communication. Knowledge transfer occurs through online and in-person training, with coaching for field implementation. Ongoing collaboration is maintained through joint initiatives, regular communication, and participation in knowledge-sharing networks to ensure best practices.

SCALING STRATEGY

- NLR Indonesia's goal is to scale SRHR education for youth with disabilities worldwide.
- The organization plans to expand by working with government agencies, NGOs, and disability-focused institutions.
- Preferred partners are those with a focus on disability, children, youth, and health.
- Key partner requirements include cultural compatibility and active participation in local context adaptation.
- NLR Indonesia emphasizes long-term funding agreements for financial sustainability.

Joint online library of multilingual signed stories

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY/WAY PROGRAMME – UNITED STATES

The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) developed the Deaf World Around You (WAY) platform, an open-source library for multilingual signed stories. This initiative improves access to sign language storybooks, benefiting deaf children and their families. With over 308 storybooks and 10,200 views, RIT aims to expand WAY globally.

Problem targeted

Accessing stories in their national and local sign languages can be difficult for children in low-income countries.

Ideal partners for RIT include deaf organizations, NGOs, government agencies, literacy groups, and educational institutions. Essential resources include financial support, technical expertise, content development skills (including sign language proficiency), and training capacities.

Solution, innovation, and impact

In 2018, the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), located in New York State, launched the Deaf World Around You (WAY) platform, an open-source, web-based library for multilingual signed stories. The platform enables content creators to integrate images, text, and videos into visual storybooks in multiple sign languages, available at no cost to users. Contributors can expand existing stories by adding videos in additional sign

languages. RIT provides open licenses, allowing technical teams to modify and enhance the platform freely.

The target audience includes deaf children and their families, particularly in remote areas with limited or no internet access.

To date, RIT has created 308 storybooks, primarily in Filipino and Fijian Sign Language, with a growing collection. The platform has recorded over 10,200 views, with increasing user engagement.

Strategy and objectives

Over the next five years, RIT plans to expand WAY to at least five new countries, starting with Spanish-speaking regions, followed by select areas in Asia and Africa. Content development goals include publishing 100 new signed storybooks and supporting at least five sign languages.

Further growth targets aim to expand the user base by 25 percent annually and launch a multilingual website and app with access to all resources in at least two major languages.

Scaling and implementation

RIT has successfully implemented its platform in the Philippines, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Mexico.

In each country, RIT collaborated with deaf organizations and NGOs to implement the WAY platform successfully. The presence in these countries was established through training collaborations and open-source access. Services provided include sign language translations, storybook development, capacity-building programmes, and research initiatives.

Partner requirements

Ideal partners for RIT include deaf organizations, NGOs, government agencies, literacy groups, and educational institutions. Partners must adhere to educational and copyright regulations, ensure linguistic adaptation, and align with national

FACTS & FIGURES

- 308 signed storybooks created, mainly in Filipino and Fijian Sign Language.
- 10,200+ views recorded, with a growing user base.
- Successfully implemented in the Philippines, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Mexico.



Dr. Chris Kurz

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WAY enables content creators to integrate images, text, and videos into visual storybooks in multiple sign languages, available at no cost to users. Contributors can expand existing stories by adding videos in additional sign languages.

education policies. A core requirement is the employment of deaf professionals at various levels, including leadership roles.

Essential resources include financial support, technical expertise, content development skills (including sign language proficiency), and training capacities. If partners commercialize adapted content, a reinvestment agreement may be required to maintain free access to core resources.

Investment and funding

The investment required to implement WAY in a new country depends on localization needs, content development, and infrastructure. Estimated costs range from \$25,000 to \$60,000 per country, including:

- Content Development & Localization (\$10,000–\$30,000)
- Technology & Infrastructure (\$3,000–\$5,000)
- Training & Capacity-Building (\$10,000–\$20,000)
- Community Outreach & Advocacy (\$2,000–\$5,000)

WAY is provided free of charge, ensuring accessibility. While RIT offers technical support, partners must finance ongoing implementation and outreach. Running costs depend on the programme scale, sign language adaptation needs, local server hosting, and the development of additional storybooks.

Financial responsibility primarily rests with partner organizations, which may seek external funding from donors, agencies, and NGOs. RIT provides the platform, training, and ongoing support.

Support and network

RIT offers structured training programmes for educators and content creators, empowering local communities to take ownership of content development. Collaborations with international partners contribute to the refinement of storybook development standards, covering areas such as parental engagement and teachers' utilization of WAY resources.

RIT promotes deaf-led initiatives while working with hearing allies. Support includes training in content creation, technical implementation, and localization strategies. Costs vary based on service levels, but partners benefit from knowledge transfer and access to an extensive expert network. Most training programmes are free, with costs applying only to advanced modules.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Expand to at least five new countries in five years, starting with Spanish-speaking regions.
- Publish 100 new signed storybooks and support at least five sign languages.
- Grow the online user base by 25 percent annually.
- Target partnerships with deaf organizations, schools, NGOs, and literacy groups.
- Launch a multilingual website and app for broader accessibility.

Strategy 6

Using the resources of universities and the education system

Some organizations choose to partner with universities and education and research institutions. They leverage academic resources, funding opportunities, and student expertise to accelerate and reach broader audiences.



Scale-up organizations can create synergies with universities and education institutions, for example, by offering learning materials in additional formats, or by offering students opportunities for their master's theses and to join incubator programmes.

Universities and education and research institutions often possess unique resources and access to public funding and sponsorship, which are utilized by some scale-up organizations and local partners. For social businesses and social enterprises, collaboration with universities or the education system can be crucial for scaling to achieve critical mass, affordability, and availability.

Resources that can be leveraged

Various resources can be leveraged by innovative solutions, offering synergies and partnerships:

- Utilizing government budgets allocated to the education sector and universities, alongside sponsorship programmes by philanthropists or the business sector for research cooperation.
- Engaging with incubator programmes that support students and researchers in implementing innovative ideas.
- Leveraging academic expertise to obtain data and scientific evidence.
- Collaborating with students on master's theses or projects.
- Accessing producers of learning materials of all kinds.

Benetech, a U.S. non-profit organization, developed Bookshare, a software platform providing books and printed materials in five accessible formats. Universities and educational institutions are logical partners in content development and as customers. Benetech has strong links

with universities, especially in technological development, social innovation, and accessibility. Stanford University played a significant role in Benetech's early development, as founder Jim Fruchterman studied there and connected with Stanford researchers and engineers. Bookshare is actively used by schools, universities, and libraries to provide access to books for people with reading disabilities. Benetech collaborates globally with educational institutions to provide learning materials in accessible formats and conduct research projects. Due to copyright issues, users must be 'eligible students' to use Bookshare for free, emphasizing the importance of educational institutions as a target group.

TOM Global maintains a particularly close relationship with universities worldwide, as they are central to innovation development and dissemination. Founded in Israel in 2014 by the REUT Group, TOM Global focuses on developing open and cost-effective solutions for persons with disabilities or special needs by connecting 'need-knowers' with 'makers' such as engineers and designers. Many TOM communities are based at universities, offering advantages such as creative energy, technical expertise, and resources such as 3D printing. Students gain practical experience and implement socially relevant projects as part of their master's and doctoral theses. Support from universities and research institutions also facilitates the development of open-source technologies.

Accessible eBook library with over 1.7 million users in 90 countries

BENETECH – BOOKSHARE / UNITED STATES

Benetech, a US non-profit organization, has developed Bookshare, a software platform that provides books and printed materials in five accessible formats. With 32 million books distributed to 2 million users in 90 countries, Benetech collaborates with local partners to expand its impact and ensure access to inclusive education worldwide.

Problems targeted

Individuals with reading barriers face significant difficulties accessing books and printed materials due to a lack of accessible formats.

Benetech seeks collaborations with NGOs, governments, schools, and businesses to customize solutions. Local partners provide infrastructure, recruit trainers, and share funding responsibilities.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Benetech's software platform converts books and other print materials into accessible digital formats, such as electronic Braille and DAISY synchronized text with audio, at a lower cost than traditional methods. Users can apply by providing proof of disability, and they can then access materials in the format best suited to their needs. Partnerships with publishers and libraries help reduce the cost of accessible books compared to traditional methods.

The flagship product, Bookshare, utilizes AI and Optical Character Recognition to enhance access to educational content. It has expanded globally through partnerships, allowing libraries to integrate Bookshare and provide access to materials available under the Marrakesh Treaty, an international agreement aimed at improving access to published works for visually impaired and print-disabled individuals. By 2024, Bookshare has delivered 32 million books to over 2 million individuals in 90 countries, with a particular focus on underserved communities. Its collection includes over 1.3 million titles available worldwide.

Strategy and objectives

As a non-profit organization, Benetech aims to expand its innovative solutions to global markets to provide access to equitable education, particularly for children and students with disabilities, and to empower disadvantaged populations worldwide. Programmes in developing countries are implemented by Benetech in collaboration with local partners and are not intended to be profit-making. Only in developed countries does Benetech charge a fee for the use of its online library Bookshare.

Scaling and implementation

Benetech collaborates with digital literacy partners in over 30 countries worldwide, including libraries, to provide accessible materials under the Marrakesh Treaty. The organization also supports partners to deliver accessible books and education materials at scale in their countries.

Outside the United States, Benetech runs major programmes in Burkina Faso, India, Kenya, and the Philippines. India, with more than 22,000 Bookshare members, hosts the largest programme, training over 3,000 students in digital tools, distributing 2,000 devices, and training 800 teachers through in-person and online courses.

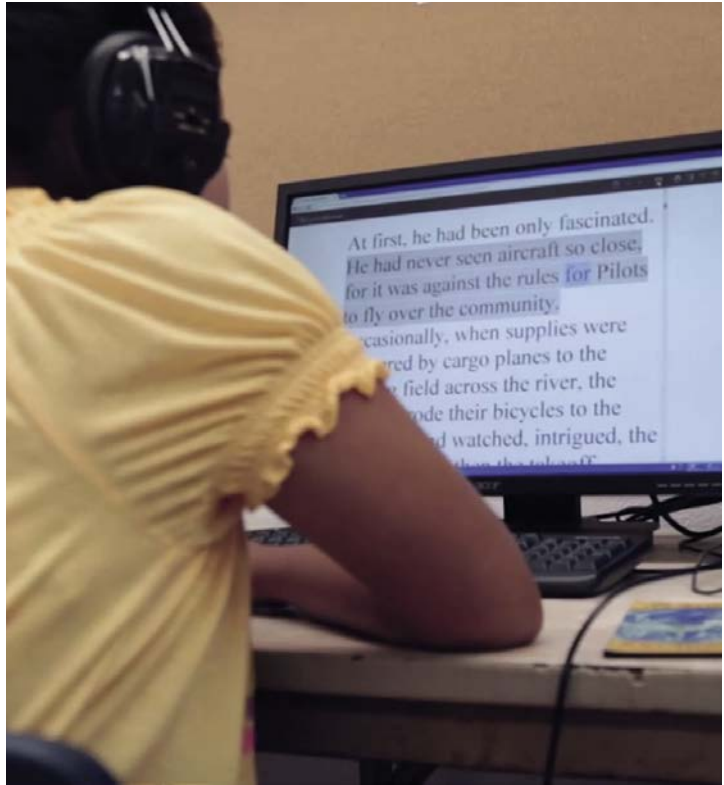
FACTS & FIGURES

- Bookshare has delivered 32 million books to 2 million people in 90 countries.
- The platform includes over 1.3 million titles available globally.
- Benetech's programme has a significant focus on underserved communities.



Lisa Wadors

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Benetech's software platform converts books and other print materials into accessible digital formats, such as electronic Braille and DAISY synchronized text with audio, at a lower cost than traditional methods.

Partner requirements

Benetech seeks collaborations with NGOs, governments, schools, and businesses to customize solutions, enhance sustainability, and build local capacity. Local partners provide infrastructure, recruit trainers, and share funding responsibilities, while Benetech adapts technologies, offers training, and ensures compliance with local regulations. Further, Benetech accompanies and supports programmes in new countries over a period of three years, with the aim of transferring its programmes to a local entity.

Investment and funding

In the United States eligible students have unfettered access to Bookshare, while others pay a sliding-scale fee up to \$50 annually. In many developing countries membership is also free. The cost of launching an education digital transformation programme varies by location and scale. For 1,000 students in Asia, costs average \$500 per student, covering content conversion, training, and assistive devices, though the cost per student decreases with scale.

In developing countries Benetech covers the technology costs of Bookshare, including ingesting and hosting books, hosting user accounts, and facilitating access to the Bookshare collection. These costs, which amount to millions of dollars globally, are not included in the initial

cost estimates. Other costs are typically covered by partners or by funders that Benetech and its partners can attract.

Support and network

Support to partners includes training to create accessible content in the local language, training on how to use mainstream and assistive technology for inclusion in the classroom, and targeted training for local technology and education experts. Benetech also provides procurement advice on the selection of affordable assistive technologies that are appropriate for the region.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Benetech aims to expand globally for equitable education access.
- The organization scales through local partnerships and sustainable programmes
- Preferred partners include NGOs, governments, schools, and businesses.
- Partners must provide infrastructure, trainers, and funding support.
- Programmes transfer to local entities after three years.

A global and free platform for creating and sharing assistive technologies

REUT USA – TOM GLOBAL / UNITED STATES

TOM Global, a U.S.-based initiative of Reut USA, develops open-source assistive devices by connecting engineers, designers, and individuals with disabilities. Its solutions are widely replicable and up to 99 percent cheaper than market alternatives, impacting communities in over 35 countries. The organization aims to scale its model to 100 countries.

Problems targeted

TOM Global addresses the global lack of affordable and accessible assistive technology solutions for individuals with disabilities, which are often neglected.

TOM fosters local communities through partnerships with universities, rehabilitation centres, makerspaces, and municipalities. Funding partners, including foundations and international bodies, are essential for scaling.

Solution, innovation, and impact

TOM Global, a project of Reut USA, connects 'Makers' (engineers, designers, and caregivers) with 'Need Knowers' (individuals with disabilities) to co-develop assistive devices. Covering communication, mobility, daily living, sports, and music, TOM's solutions leverage local manufacturing, often using 3D printing. Its online portfolio offers over 1,000 open-source solutions, allowing global

replication through step-by-step guides. TOM integrates universities and vocational schools, providing access to 3D printers and makerspaces for distributed manufacturing. Students and faculty contribute through academic projects.

Since inception, TOM has reached 35+ countries, including 100 campuses. In 2024 the TOM Global Innovation Challenge engaged 400 participants from 20 countries, generating 120 new projects. The University Fellowship Program involved 81 TOM Fellows across 57 campuses in 10 countries. TOM solutions are 80–99 percent cheaper than market alternatives, making assistive technology widely accessible.

Strategy and objectives

TOM aims to expand to 100 countries by fostering local TOM communities through partnerships with universities, rehabilitation centres, makerspaces, and municipalities. The strategy relies on an open-source platform that enables global distribution and adaptation of solutions, ensuring accessibility even in remote regions. TOM remains flexible in scaling, adapting to local needs and exploring alternative funding models such as fee-for-service partnerships.

Scaling and implementation

TOM's global reach is driven by its open-source platform, which enabled the development of 930 solutions and, in 2024, the production of over 1,400 products. Its University Program has grown from 12 campuses in 2020 to 57 in 2024. The annual TOM Global Innovation Challenge broadens participation, while country-specific initiatives, such as Albania's government-backed makerspace network, demonstrate adaptable implementation models.

Different regions employ varying approaches. Some universities lead implementation, while in other areas community-driven makerspaces

FACTS & FIGURES

- TOM's online portfolio offers over 1,000 open-source solutions.
- Since inception, TOM has reached 35+ countries, including 62 campuses.
- In 2024, over 1,400 products were produced and 120 new projects launched.



Edun Sela

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TOM Global connects 'Makers' (engineers, designers, and caregivers) with 'Need Knowers' (individuals with disabilities) to co-develop assistive devices in communication, mobility, daily living, sports, and music. Solutions leverage local manufacturing, often using 3D printing.

and healthcare centres spearhead efforts. In low-resource settings, TOM collaborates with local makers to identify alternative materials and manufacturing methods, ensuring affordability and adaptability.

Partner requirements

TOM seeks partners with access to networks of makers, care professionals, medical facilities and universities to co-create and deploy solutions. Funding partners, including foundations and international bodies, are essential for scaling. Partners must align with TOM's open-source approach, providing local resources for training and implementation.

Prospective partners undergo a cooperative evaluation process, including joint activities to assess engagement, operational capacity, and commitment to open-source principles. Long-term sustainability is a key criterion, ensuring TOM's methodologies integrate into existing infrastructures. TOM supports partners through mentorship, structured assessments, and pilot projects, with ongoing feedback ensuring continuous improvement.

Investment and funding

Launching TOM's model in a new country requires \$50,000 to \$250,000 annually, depending on local engagement and resource availability. Costs cover personnel, facility rental, equipment procurement, training, and project development. Funding comes

primarily from philanthropic donations, foundation grants, and government support. TOM is also developing a fee-for-service model for hospitals, municipalities, and corporations, reinvesting any revenue into programme expansion. Most TOM communities are self-funded, with network-generated income reinvested to strengthen the initiative.

Support and network

TOM's partnership model emphasizes training partners to establish self-sustaining operations, rather than direct funding. The global network fosters collaboration, enabling shared initiatives and knowledge exchange. Support is tailored to partner needs, with associated costs varying based on engagement levels.

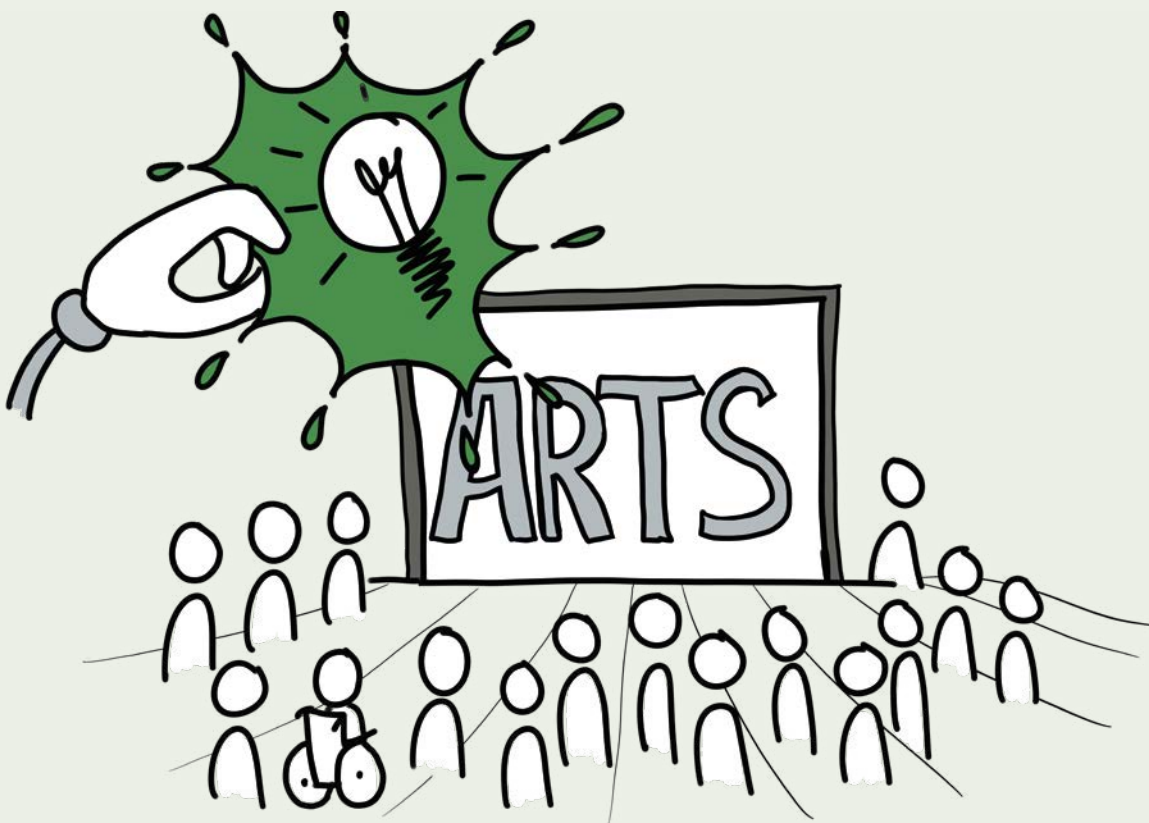
SCALING STRATEGY

- The goal is to expand to 100 countries with local TOM communities.
- Scaling relies on an open-source platform for global solution distribution.
- TOM solutions are 80–99 percent cheaper than market alternatives.
- Preferred partners include universities, rehabilitation centres, and makerspaces.
- TOM adapts to regional needs and explores fee-for-service funding models.

Strategy 7

Using the resources of arts institutions and museums

Some organizations choose to partner with museums and arts institutions, supporting their mission of inclusive and accessible communication and participation for diverse audiences.



Museums, orchestras, choirs, opera houses, theatres, and movie production companies aim to communicate inclusively: Services that can be provided by Scale-up organizations.

Similar to universities and the education system, museums and other arts institutions, many of which are co-funded by governments or private donors, possess resources utilized by scale-up organizations and local partners. Museums, orchestras, choirs, opera houses, theatres, and movie production companies aim to communicate inclusively, ensuring no one is left behind. However, real-life communication in the arts and within these institutions often faces barriers. Consequently, they are generally interested in solutions that enhance accessibility and inclusivity.

Content, interaction, and hiring practices

Scaling up in this context often involves adapting annual budgets and existing programmes by arts institutions. Innovative solutions in digital transformation and in individualized and barrier-free interaction can enhance accessibility, as can inclusion in an institution's artistic and other personnel.

One such innovation is offered by **Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** in Germany, which has developed an inclusive museum tour model that trains persons with disabilities to become museum guides. This innovation is marketed as a social franchise by Capito, seeking partnerships with museums and other arts institutions. The partnership is based on licensing to ensure consistency across locations, while also building the Capito brand and securing long-term collaboration.

White Hands Chorus NIPPON (WHCN) is an inclusive youth choir that integrates young people who are deaf or have other disabilities through sign language and singing. Inspired by the Venezuelan White Hands Chorus (Coro de Manos Blancas), founded in 1975 by El Sistema, a publicly funded music education programme, WHCN has developed a model with clear guidelines and training offered to theatres, education ministries, schools, and conservatories as licensing and operating partners without license fees.

Training persons with disabilities to be museum guides

CAPITO MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN / GERMANY

Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany has developed an inclusive museum tour model that trains persons with disabilities to become museum guides. The project, which is currently being rolled out in six other countries, creates employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and improves accessibility to museum education.

Problems targeted

Informational and educational content in museums are often not accessible to visitors with disabilities, which also makes professional participation in museums more difficult for persons with disabilities.

Capito MV seeks partnerships with museums and inclusion organizations committed to accessibility. Partners must provide staff resources for coordination, qualification, and accessibility implementation within their institutions.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Capito is an Austrian social franchise network with 20 locations in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Capito MV), based in Germany, has worked in partnership with the Staatliches Museum Schwerin, a museum and art gallery, to develop a training course for persons

with disabilities to conduct art tours. The initiative creates employment opportunities while improving museum accessibility.

Since 2017 seven guides have been trained through a course developed by Capito MV and museum educators. The training covers art history, visitor communication, and handling challenging situations, with materials available in easy language. Trainees contribute to course design, ensuring its relevance. Trained guides serve as inclusion consultants, promoting accessibility and awareness through guided tours and media outreach. Over 500 visitors have attended 25 accessible tours, and guides have expressed interest in further professional development in the museum sector.

Strategy and objectives

Capito MV aims to expand its inclusive museum guidance model internationally, enabling persons with disabilities to access cultural education and employment. The organization works with museums and inclusion-focused institutions to train individuals with disabilities and integrate accessibility into existing educational frameworks. Using a social franchise model, Capito MV provides expertise, training materials, and licensing while allowing local partners to adapt the approach. The initiative is flexible and scalable, with the potential to extend beyond museums to other fields where accessibility is essential. The training model is designed for adaptability, allowing partners to tailor content to cultural and linguistic contexts.

Scaling and implementation

Capito MV is expanding its programme through partnerships in Austria, Belgium, Israel, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden. In Israel it collaborates with four museums and exhibition spaces, reaching over 100 artists with disabilities, some of whom train as museum guides. The organization is also working with the European Parliament and

FACTS & FIGURES

- Capito MV has trained seven guides through a specialized course for accessible art tours since 2017.
- Over 500 visitors have attended 25 accessible museum tours led by trained guides.
- Capito MV is expanding its reach with partnerships in Austria, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden.



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The organization works with museums and inclusion-focused institutions to train individuals with disabilities and integrate accessibility into existing educational frameworks.

partners in Belgium and Poland to make the Polish EU presidency's art exhibition accessible. Additionally, Capito MV collaborates with Israeli and German institutions to present an exhibition featuring artists with disabilities, supported by governmental agencies.

Partner requirements

Capito MV seeks partnerships with museums and inclusion organizations committed to accessibility. Partners must provide staff resources for coordination, qualification, and accessibility implementation within their institutions. A licensing agreement ensures consistency across locations, and partners are responsible for funding qualification programmes and integrating training into their operations. Capito MV collaborates with local experts to align training materials with regional accessibility standards.

Investment and funding

The annual licensing fee is €5,000 covering essential resources, branding, and technical support. Additional costs depend on implementation scale, number of participants, and network type. Travel expenses may apply for in-person training.

Partners must finance qualification programmes and museum guidance initiatives, but external funding from grants, government programmes, or private sponsors may be available. Capito MV supports partners in identifying funding opportunities to ensure sustainability.

Support and network

Capito MV employs a train-the-trainer approach, enabling local educators to train future museum guides. This ensures sustainable knowledge transfer and strengthens local accessibility expertise. Training modules cover accessibility principles, inclusive education, and art education methods. Sessions are delivered online or on-site, depending on local needs. Capito MV provides continuous support, updates to materials, and peer-to-peer training. Partners must participate in mandatory training and adhere to quality assurance measures, including regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Capito MV aims to expand internationally, offering an inclusive guidance model for museums.
- The organization uses a social franchise model, licensing expertise and training materials to local partners.
- Preferred partners are museums and inclusion organizations committed to accessibility.
- Partners must provide resources for training coordination and fund qualification programmes.
- Capito MV provides continuous support, materials updates, and peer-to-peer training to ensure sustainability.

A replicable inclusive youth choir model integrating sign language

WHITE HAND CHORUS NIPPON / JAPAN

The White Hands Chorus NIPPON (WHCN) from Japan pioneers an inclusive choir model, integrating youth who are deaf and with other disabilities into music through sign language and singing. Offering free lessons and professional performances, WHCN grew from 35 members in 2017 to 98 members in 2024 and expanded to three locations in Japan, aiming for global impact.

Problems targeted

The Japanese education system lacks adequate inclusive environments for children with and without disabilities.

WHCN seeks licensing and operational partners – such as theatres, ministries of education, schools, and conservatories. Initial implementation costs include travel and trainer fees, sign language interpretation, venue rental, and artistic elements such as photo exhibitions.

Solution, innovation, and impact

The White Hands Chorus NIPPON (WHCN) is an inclusive youth choir for children aged 6 to 20, half of whom have disabilities, inspired by Venezuela's White Hands Chorus (Coro de Manos Blancas), which was founded in 1995. WHCN features a singing group, including individuals with vision

impairment, wheelchair users, and children with Down syndrome, alongside a gestural group of deaf members who express lyrics in sign language using white gloves. WHCN provides free workshops, online lessons, and certified teacher training, integrating professional artists with disabilities. The choir offers a platform for artistic expression and social inclusion. Since its inception, WHCN has expanded from one to three locations in Japan, with specific plans for additional locations in 2025.

Strategy and objectives

WHCN has signed a cooperative agreement with El Sistema, a publicly financed music education programme founded in Venezuela in 1975, aligning with over 70 international agreements, but with a distinct focus on musical education for deaf children. The agreement's primary goal is to expand the programme internationally, establishing a network of inclusive choirs in at least three additional countries while collaborating with universities on research into music education for deaf children. Austria is the initial target for expansion, with France, Germany, India, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom also under consideration. The model adapts to cultural and regional contexts by incorporating both universal and local music. WHCN is open to extending the programme to additional target groups while maintaining its core principles of inclusion.

Scaling and implementation

WHCN has successfully introduced its model in Germany through licensing and training partnerships. A major initiative involved collaboration with the Beethovenfest Bonn, where WHCN provided artistic direction for an inclusive concert, curated a photo exhibition, and trained 200 young musicians, including 18 deaf performers. New Zealand, with its commitment to indigenous and sign languages, has shown interest in exploring inclusive music

FACTS & FIGURES

- WHCN choir members range in age from 6 to 20 years, half of whom with disabilities.
- In 2024 WHCN operated in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Okinawa.
- The model has been successfully implemented in Germany, training 200 musicians.



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WHCN features a singing group, including individuals with vision impairment, wheelchair users, and children with Down syndrome, alongside a gestural group of deaf members who express lyrics in sign language using white gloves.

education. France's strong tradition of music education for the deaf, and the UK's progress in inclusive arts present further opportunities for expansion.

Partner requirements

WHCN seeks licensing and operational partners – such as theatres, ministries of education, schools, and conservatories – to implement its model. Essential requirements include qualified music teachers, rehearsal space, participant management, and financial support. Legal frameworks must be in place to ensure compliance with child protection and disability inclusion policies.

Implementation requires the active participation of deaf individuals, the use of white gloves for the gestural group, and collaboration between vocal and sign performers. WHCN encourages partnerships with musicians familiar with Western music scores and a strong local sign language culture to enhance programme effectiveness. Free access to the programme can be facilitated through El Sistema or independent agreements.

Investment and funding

WHCN does not charge licensing fees. Initial implementation costs include travel and trainer fees, sign language interpretation, venue rental, and artistic elements such as photo workshops and exhibitions. Costs are shared between WHCN and

local partners, with funding sought from governments, schools, and organizations committed to inclusive education and the arts.

Support and network

WHCN provides training programmes for teachers, offering artistic and methodological guidance to ensure effective replication. The organization supports local adaptation while maintaining its core approach. Additionally, WHCN integrates tactile photography, enriching artistic expression and accessibility for visually impaired participants.

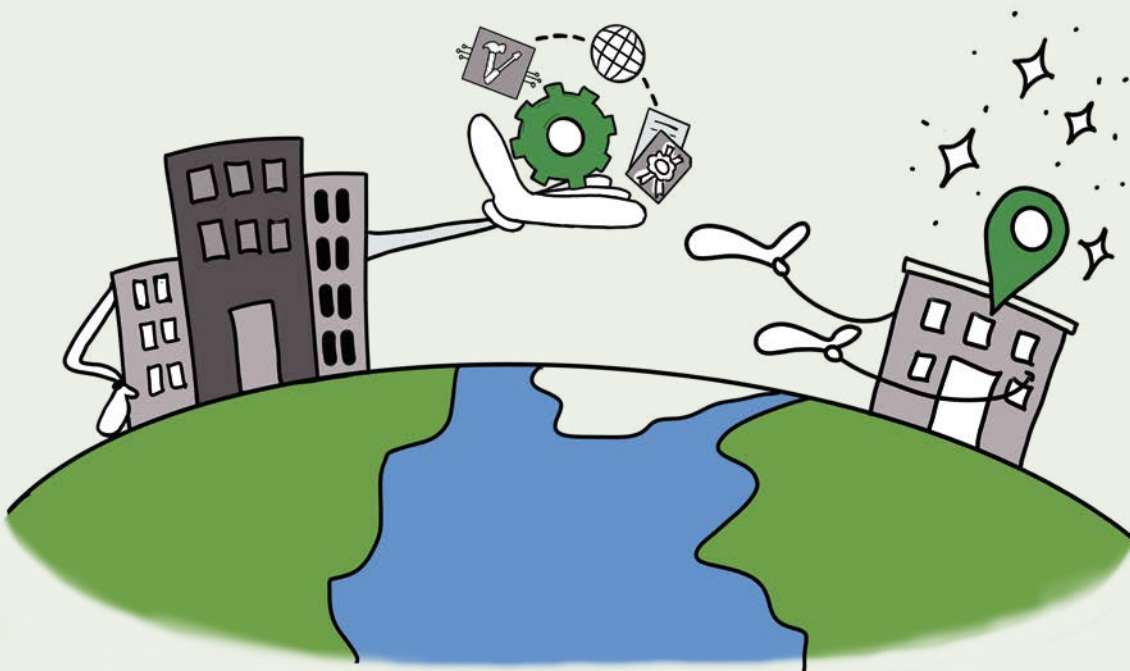
SCALING STRATEGY

- Scaling is achieved via licensing, training partnerships, and local adaptations.
- WHCN does not charge licensing fees.
- Preferred partners include theatres, schools, conservatories, and ministries.
- Partners must provide trained teachers, rehearsal space, and financial support.
- WHCN ensures model fidelity while allowing adaptation to cultural contexts.

Strategy 8

Prestigious partnerships built on grant and government funding

Some organizations manage to partner at high levels with governments, major cultural institutions, philanthropists, and corporate sponsors, leveraging professional management and high-profile visibility.



Some scale-up organizations can operate at a high level with governments, companies, and philanthropists by offering a well-known brand, professional management, and sometimes even celebrities that local partners might want to associate with.

Some strategies for scaling up operate at a high level with governments, municipalities, leading cultural institutions, and prominent philanthropists or corporate sponsors. These scale-up organizations can offer a well-known brand, professional management of the entire cooperation, and sometimes even celebrities that local partners may wish to associate with when funding the scaling.

A variety of themes

These strategies span various themes such as sports, culture, disaster response, and youth support. Sponsors typically do not require a defined business model but seek visibility, professional management, media attention, high-powered events, or advertising campaigns associated with their own organization as the local partner.

Founded in the Netherlands in 2007, the **Karuna Foundation** launched the Inspire2Care programme as a local initiative in Nepal in 2008. After being rolled out nationwide, the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (DPRP) was established in 2019, aiming to scale the programme to other countries with partners that have sufficient financial and human resources and the capacity to integrate DPRP into local health and social systems, usually national or regional governments, or international funding agencies. Implementing the DPRP in a new country requires approximately €1.5 million over three years to reach 25,000 persons with disabilities.

RET Americas, part of the Swiss-based RET Alliance, operates similarly in many areas. RET

International is one of the world's leading NGOs working in crisis and post-conflict situations. In 2015, the organization implemented an inclusive school safety project in Panama, the first initiative to integrate disaster risk reduction and management into the public school curricula for students with disabilities. It has also become a model for international replication and for adaptation to different contexts. The estimated start-up costs of between \$250,000 and \$500,000 are shared among RET, funding partners, and external sponsors such as NGOs and government agencies. RET's funding and scaling model involves long-term partnerships with international institutions such as the European Union, the United Nations (e.g., UNHCR), and other governmental development organizations that can cover a majority of the scaling costs.

Special Olympics is a well-established global organization with extensive support from private donors, major multinational corporations, foundations, and governments. This diverse funding allows the organization to expand its programmes to promote sport and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities in many countries. One such programme is Escuelas Unificadas, an education initiative that promotes inclusion through sport, leadership, and shared learning experiences. Launched in Panama in 2019 by Special Olympics Latin America (SOLA), the programme has since expanded to 14 countries in Central and South America, with unified schools established in six more. Funding is provided by SOLA, but successful implementation relies on government support to integrate inclusion into school systems.

A local approach to improving the lives of persons with disabilities worldwide

KARUNA FOUNDATION / NEPAL – NETHERLANDS

Karuna Foundation Nepal launched 'Inspire2Care' in 2008 to prevent disabilities and promote community-based rehabilitation. Building on its success, the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (DPRP) was initiated in 2019 in Nepal's Koshi province, reaching 137 municipalities and over 70,000 people. The model has since been replicated internationally.

Problems targeted

In many countries the prevention and rehabilitation of disabilities is seen as the sole responsibility of external aid organizations or specialized institutions.

Karuna seeks national and international partners with financial and human resources, a strong commitment to scaling the programme, and the capacity to integrate DPRP into local healthcare and social systems.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Karuna Foundation Nepal is an Nepalese non-profit organization dedicated to preventing disabilities and improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities in Nepal by strengthening healthcare systems and empowering local communities. In 2008 it launched the 'Inspire2Care' programme,

improving the livelihoods of persons with disabilities and providing vocational training for them and their families. After a successful pilot phase, the programme was replicated in ten municipalities in Nepal from 2015 onwards.

Building on its success, the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (DPRP) was introduced in 2019 in Nepal's Koshi province, now covering all 137 municipalities and benefiting over 70,000 children, adults with disabilities, couples planning for children, pregnant mothers, and newborns. The programme operates on a cost-sharing model whereby Karuna initially covers a third of the costs, with local governments taking full ownership from year three onwards. Nepal's federal government has now committed to expanding DPRP to other provinces.

Strategy and objectives

Karuna aims to scale DPRP internationally, ensuring broader access to disability prevention and rehabilitation services. Its strategy involves replicating the Nepal model by forming partnerships with local organizations, providing technical assistance, and adapting the approach to regional needs. The programme's flexibility allows it to be tailored to various social and healthcare challenges. Open-source tools, training models, and expert guidance ensure successful implementation in diverse settings. Karuna's vision is to empower local communities and governments to take full responsibility for disability prevention and care, creating a lasting impact.

Scaling and implementation

Karuna has facilitated DPRP's expansion to Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania, where local NGOs lead implementation in partnership with governments. The foundation provides ongoing technical support, including learning visits to Nepal

FACTS & FIGURES

- DPRP benefits over 70,000 people in all 137 municipalities of Koshi province, Nepal.
- The model has expanded to Bangladesh, the DRC, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.
- The estimated cost to implement DPRP in a new country is €1.5 million over three years, depending on a number of factors.



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The Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme in Nepal's Koshi province operates on a cost-sharing model whereby Karuna initially covers a third of the costs, with local governments taking full ownership from year three onwards.

and the development of programme strategies and budgets. A global Knowledge and Evidence Lab has also been established to share expertise and best practices. By partnering with organizations willing to implement DPRP, Karuna seeks to reach the most marginalized communities and create a lasting, sustainable impact.

Partner requirements

Karuna seeks national and international partners with financial and human resources, a strong commitment to scaling the programme, and the capacity to integrate DPRP into local healthcare and social systems. Ideal partners should engage in open-source sharing of expertise and tools while collaborating with universities or research institutions. A long-term vision, local government involvement, and the ability to adapt the model to specific local contexts are essential. A strong focus on sustainability and policy integration is key to long-term success.

Investment and funding

Implementing DPRP in a new country requires approximately €1.5 million over three years to reach 25,000 individuals with disabilities. However, the actual amount will depend on a number of factors. Funding sources vary by context, with potential contributions from government agencies, international donors, and private sector partners. In Nepal, DPRP has successfully secured federal, provincial, and local government funding. In new

regions, sustainable financial models will depend on local partnerships and available resources. Karuna supports partners in identifying funding opportunities and structuring financial plans for long-term programme viability.

Support and network

Karuna provides technical support to partner organizations through training, programme manuals, and strategic guidance. It facilitates learning visits to Nepal and offers expertise, tools, and strategies to ensure effective implementation. Through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and strategic alliances, the foundation fosters a global network of partners dedicated to improving disability prevention and care systems worldwide.

SCALING STRATEGY

- Karuna aims to expand DPRP globally by replicating its successful Nepal model.
- Scaling is achieved through partnerships with local NGOs and governments.
- Ideal partners must have financial and human resources and commit to long-term success.
- Partners must integrate the model into local healthcare and social systems.
- Open-source tools, training, and technical support ensure sustainable implementation.

Enhancing natural disaster preparedness for youth with disabilities

RET AMERICAS – DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT / PANAMA

RET Americas, part of the Swiss-based RET Alliance, has pioneered an inclusive school safety project in Panama, integrating disaster risk reduction into public education for students with disabilities. The initiative has expanded nationally and inspired regional efforts, including training for first responders in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Problems targeted

Children and youth with disabilities in Panama are not sufficiently aware of the risks and dangers associated with the El Niño phenomenon and are not adequately trained to prevent and manage the potential effects of natural disasters.

RET seeks partners with strong local connections, sector experience, and established policies on procurement, financial management, and accountability. Expanding RET's programme to a new country requires investment in infrastructure, training, educational materials, and community outreach.

Solution, innovation, and impact

RET Americas is part of the RET Alliance, covering RET's operations in Latin America and the Caribbean region. RET International is one of the leading NGOs addressing crises and post-conflict challenges. Since 2015, RET Americas has

implemented an inclusive school safety project in Panama, the first initiative integrating disaster risk reduction and management (DRR&M) into public school curricula for students with disabilities. RET has also built the capacity of education partners through training and guidelines.

Since its launch, the programme has reached over 6,000 beneficiaries. In 2024, RET expanded the initiative by linking the Panamanian Institute of Special Habilitation with the Association of Municipalities of Panama to integrate risk management methodologies for inclusive communities and educational centres. Trained personnel now deliver capacity-building efforts nationwide, extending beyond schools into community spaces. Inspired by its success in Panama, RET contributed to a regional course on disability inclusion for first responders, and played a key role in developing the Accessibility Guide for Face-to-Face and Virtual Events through the Disaster Risk Management and Disability Network of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Strategy and objectives

The model is designed for international replication and adaptation to diverse contexts. RET focuses on scaling within the 16 countries where it has legal registration and endorsements while considering expansion into new regions based on assessed needs. The approach prioritizes localization by employing local staff and forging partnerships with national organizations to ensure culturally relevant solutions. The programme is adaptable to various vulnerable populations, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons, contingent on local conditions and partnerships.

Scaling and implementation

RET has supported 2.4 million participants across 450 programmes in 35 countries since 2000.

FACTS & FIGURES

- The programme has reached over 6,000 beneficiaries since 2015.
- RET has implemented over 450 programmes, supporting 2.4 million participants globally.
- The initiative inspired regional first responder training and policy development.



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Trained personnel now deliver capacity-building efforts nationwide, extending beyond schools into community spaces.

Its extensive experience enables the effective transfer of initiatives to new contexts, adapting interventions to local languages, customs, and cultures. In Panama, RET's strategy of building local capacities through community-based initiatives has proven effective, extending the programme's reach beyond schools to broader community engagement. Inspired by this success, the inclusion course for first responders is now being prepared for expansion to additional countries.

Partner requirements

RET seeks partners with strong local connections, sector experience, and established policies on procurement, financial management, and accountability. While these policies are preferred, RET is willing to assist in their development. Legal registration, compliance with national regulations, and good standing with donor governments are required. Partnerships operate under a subcontracting model, ensuring partner independence within the collaboration framework.

Investment and funding

Expanding RET's programme to a new country requires investment in infrastructure, training, educational materials, and community outreach. Estimated start-up costs range between \$250,000 and \$500,000, with variations depending on project scale and location. Programme costs are shared among RET, funding partners, and external sponsors, such as NGOs and government

agencies, typically with 70 percent covered by RET and 30 percent by partner organizations. Funding is secured through donor agreements and project proposals.

Support and network

RET supports its partners in financing, personnel development, marketing, evaluation, and communication. It facilitates knowledge transfer through training, interactive materials, and inclusive educational tools such as sign language resources and adapted first aid procedures. RET fosters innovation by integrating best practices from different countries and ensuring continuous engagement and knowledge exchange.

SCALING STRATEGY

- RET aims to expand its model in the 16 countries where it is already established.
- Scaling focuses on localization through national partnerships and local staff.
- Preferred partners include organizations with strong local connections and expertise.
- Partners must have legal registration and compliance with national regulations.
- Adaptability allows expansion to various vulnerable groups, including refugees.

Special Olympics Latin America's global inclusive education initiative

SPECIAL OLYMPICS LATIN AMERICA – ESCUELAS UNIFICADAS / UNITED STATES

Escuelas Unificadas is an inclusive education programme run by Special Olympics Latin America, an international NGO based in Panama. The programme promotes an inclusive environment for children and young people with and without intellectual disabilities through joint participation in sports teams and leadership activities inside and outside the classroom.

Problems targeted

Children and young people with intellectual disabilities often lack opportunities to participate in education and other activities.

“Successful programme expansion relies on government support for integrating inclusion into school systems. Collaboration with policymakers, educators, and community organizations is essential.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Special Olympics Latin America (SOLA), an NGO based in Panama, launched Escuelas Unificadas in 2019 to foster inclusion through sports, leadership, and shared learning experiences. SOLA integrates young people with and without intellectual disabilities through its Unified Sport, Young Athletes, Inclusive Leadership, and Whole School Engagement programmes. It promotes adaptive sports,

teacher training, and joint community initiatives, creating a more inclusive environment.

Initially implemented in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, and Paraguay, the programme expanded in 2024 to Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. As of 2024, Escuelas Unificadas has engaged over 20,000 young participants, trained more than 17,000 teachers, and reached 1,368 schools – with 278 new schools added in 2024 alone. Future adaptations will extend the initiative beyond schools to include broader community engagement.

Strategy and objectives

SOLA seeks to drive systemic change by expanding the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) programme to 25 percent of schools in target communities, leveraging research on inclusion's cultural tipping points. To achieve this, SOLA collaborates with governments, ministries, corporate sponsors, sports federations, and UN agencies, integrating inclusive education and sports initiatives into national frameworks.

While the UCS model remains consistent across regions – focusing on Unified Sport, Inclusive Leadership, and Whole School Engagement – local adaptations ensure alignment with specific educational systems and cultural contexts, making the programme highly transferable on a global scale.

Scaling and implementation

SOLA expanded the UCS programme to seven new countries in 2024, with implementation supported by shared development tools, best practices, and regular virtual collaboration among local teams. Additionally, Unified Schools are being established in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay, where related programmes exist but are not yet aligned with the

FACTS & FIGURES

- Escuelas Unificadas engages over 20,000 participants across 1,368 schools.
- The programme has trained more than 17,000 teachers, promoting inclusive education.
- 278 new schools were added to the initiative in 2024 alone.
- SOLA has secured \$200,000 of its \$950,000 funding target for expansion.



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SOLA integrates young people with and without intellectual disabilities through Unified Sport, Young Athletes, Inclusive Leadership, and Whole School Engagement programmes. It promotes adaptive sports, teacher training, and joint community initiatives

UCS. Country teams are committed to establishing at least ten Unified Schools each, with planned expansions in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Paraguay adding 260 more schools. Further growth will involve strengthening partnerships and integrating UCS methodologies into existing inclusive education policies.

Partner requirements

Successful programme expansion relies on government support for integrating inclusion into school systems, in addition to demographic, economic, and cultural factors. Collaboration with policymakers, educators, and community organizations is essential. SOLA provides awareness campaigns, impact data, training resources, and technical guidance, while partners contribute by facilitating implementation, promoting inclusion within national programmes, and ensuring sustainable operations. The regional office is currently staffed by an 18-member interdisciplinary team supporting these efforts.

Investment and funding

Expanding UCS requires significant investment. SOLA aims to raise \$950,000 over the next two years to sustain the programme in seven existing countries while expanding to seven new ones and structuring UCS in three more. To date, \$200,000 has been secured, with an additional \$150,000 expected from global partners, leaving a \$600,000 funding gap. SOLA seeks to bridge this gap through corporate sponsorships and foundation grants.

The ongoing cost of maintaining a Unified Champion School averages \$6,000 annually. Long-term sustainability efforts include the Global Coalition for Inclusion, which collaborates with governments to embed inclusive education, sports, and health initiatives into national policies.

Support and network

SOLA provides partners with training, funding support, marketing, evaluation, and communication resources. Leveraging its presence in 20 countries and global connections across 170 nations, SOLA fosters continuous knowledge exchange and best-practice sharing, ensuring long-term impact and scalability.

SCALING STRATEGY

- SOLA aims to scale UCS to 25 percent of schools in target regions.
- Expansion is supported by government collaboration and national frameworks.
- Key partners include governments, corporate sponsors, sports federations, and UN agencies.
- Partners must integrate inclusion into national education systems and foster sustainable growth.

Terms used in this report

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THIS REPORT

The first Report of the Zero Project on scaling up uses and introduces a set of terms. For a better understanding, they are listed and explained here, from A to Z.

Accessibility

Used in a broad sense for this report, as defined in Article 9 of the CRPD (built environment, infrastructure, products and services, and ICT).

Affordability and availability

Services, products, or programmes that can be used by a large number of persons with disabilities because they can be bought, delivered, and used easily, and at prices that a vast majority can afford.

Business sector

For-profit companies, small and micro-companies, social businesses, start-ups, and business funding.

Capacities and resources

Available funding, but also staff and other contributors, expertise, property rights, and networks. Used similarly, with 'resources' referring more to what is available, and 'capacity' to what is used.

Civil society

NGOs, DPOs, self-advocates, grassroots organizations, privately funded foundations, and community-based services.

DPO and NGO

NGOs (non-governmental organizations) usually refer to all organizations of civil society that are not business and not public sector. DPO (Disabled People's Organizations) are a subgroup of NGOs. Some NGOs are service-providers, others work in advocacy or research, and some in a combination of them.

Entrepreneur, social entrepreneur, social business

Entrepreneurs are persons who found and/or run organizations, and use their specific skills for it. Social entrepreneurs run non-profit or hybrid organizations, sometimes called social businesses.

For-profit

Companies and start-ups with the clear goal to be profitable and sell products and services at market prices.

Franchising

A complex license agreement that also defines sets of obligations and rights both for the scale-up organization and the local partner, including use of the brand and designs, ICT-services, engagement with other stakeholders. Usually also involves franchising fees to be paid by the local partner.

ICT and technology

In its broader sense, devices and machines, software and apps, databases, Artificial Intelligence, etc. Assistive technologies are an important subgroup.

Inclusion

If not defined differently, the term inclusion relates to disability- inclusion (different to exclusion or integration; and also different to broader forms of inclusion in society).

Institution

In a broader sense, all types of organized providers, whether providing funded services or run by the public sector: e.g., social support and healthcare, education, arts and museums, ministries and their agencies, judiciary and police, etc.

Licences

Used with two different meanings: (1) public licenses that organizations need to do business or for persons to practice a profession; and (2) licensing agreements between the scale-up organization and the local partners that define the usage of their product or service.

Local partner

The organization that aims to scale (replicate, grow, distribute, share) an innovative solution to a new country or region.

Participation

Participation of persons with disabilities in all parts of planning and execution.

Programmes

Some services are better described as programmes, for example, public funding schemes or corporate strategies.

Proof-of-concept

Also called 'prototype of pilot'. Refers to Stage 3 in the scheme used for this report.

Public sector

Government, civil service, and all their agencies, institutions, and services.

Regulation

All forms of government legislation and governance from the public sector, most importantly: (1) service provision by the business sector, including licensing and minimum standards; and (2) public funding schemes (tax exemptions, subsidies, etc.) to support persons with disabilities or service provision.

Scalability

Some features that enable innovative solutions to grow.

Scale-up organization

The organization that has piloted an innovative solution and is scaling it across borders.

Scaling, growth, and replication

Scaling is an abstract term covering different forms of growth.

Scope of the Zero Project

Research in the field of disability-inclusion as defined by the CRPD, covering all types of innovations and solutions, including public policies as well as the strategies of large companies.

Scope of this report

Innovative solutions that have been launched by entrepreneurs or social entrepreneurs and are scaling across borders by using business strategies such as franchising or licensing, but also NGO-typical strategies such as training or using resources of the public sector or philanthropic funding (e.g., in education or the arts). Their goal is to reach sustainable funding to grow outside their home base.

Service provider

In its broader sense: Any organization, with any background, that delivers services to persons with disabilities in the area of care-taking, child-care, health, teaching/training, housing, public transport, legal support, etc.

Services and products

In its broader sense: Usually persons with disabilities benefit from improved services and products that are more inclusive and accessible. They can be delivered by NGOs and non-profit

service providers, but also by companies or the public sector. They can be tailored to persons with disabilities, but also make mainstream services more inclusive and accessible (e.g., schools and museums).

Solution

Broad term used for any service, product, programme, project, regulation, etc.

Stages in scaling

Refers to the model that distinguishes between the six stages of scaling.

Stakeholder

All organizations and persons with an interest or relevant role.

Start-up

A newly founded organization, whether for-profit, non-profit, or a hybrid of both.

Sustainable funding and growth

Refers to reaching Stage 6 in the scaling and development processes, as used in this report, whereby the scale-up organization and its local partners can be permanently funded by revenues (sales, licenses, subscriptions, membership fees, etc.), public funding schemes, and other sources that are available for the long term.

Transition to scale

Refers to Stage 4 in the scheme used for this report.

User/beneficiary with disabilities

Depending on the product, service, or programme, persons with disabilities are called users, beneficiaries, customers, clients, and other terms. In this report, it refers to everyone who is at the end of the supply chain.

Value chain in scaling

Refers to the model of collaboration between the scale-up organization, the local partner, the service provider, and the end user/beneficiary

Zero Project Innovative Solutions (Awardees)

Those Zero Project Awardees and Innovative Practices and Policies that have been researched and selected since 2013.

The 24 Scale-up organizations in this report

Amar Seva Sangam

India

Be My Eyes

United States

Benetech – Bookshare

United States

Capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Germany

DeafTawk

Pakistan

Egalité inclusion & Diversity

Brazil

Enable Vaani

India

Hable One

Netherlands

Incluyeme.com

Argentina

Jaipur Foot (BMVSS)

India

Karuna Foundation

Nepal – Netherlands

Livox

Brazil

Nagish

United States

NLR – My Body is Mine

Indonesia

Reach & Match

Australia

RET Americas

Panama

RIT – WAY Programme

United States

SignLab – Toleio

Norway

Special Olympics Latin America – Escuelas Unificadas

United States

Specialisterne

Denmark

Tai Tanzania

Tanzania

TOM Global – REUT USA

United States/Israel

Ugani Prosthetics

Belgium

White Hands Chorus NIPPON

Japan

Join the Network!



Join the Zero Project Network! Scan the QR code to share your contact details and get notified when the next Call for Nominations opens in May 2025.

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