



WORLD ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DAY 2026

Unlock the Everyday

Five countries, five days, one message. How Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia marked World Assistive Technology Day.



A SAFOD
CAMPAIGN REPORT

The devices already exist. The question is who can reach them.

Across the five countries of the Unlock the Everyday campaign, the same pattern repeats. Assistive technology is named in policy. Yet the people who need it most still wait. Only one in ten people in low-income countries can get the assistive technology they need. In high-income countries, nine in ten can. This gap keeps people out of school, out of work and out of daily life. Policy alone does not close it. Real change needs money, delivery and follow-through, not just good intentions.

On 4 June 2026, our members chose five very different ways to say so. In Gaborone, they filled a stadium. In Maseru, they held a national dialogue. In Zomba, they met in a law boardroom. In Johannesburg, they gathered around a breakfast table. In Lusaka, they met at a secretariat. Different settings, same message: promises on paper are not enough. People with disabilities need assistive technology now, not someday.

Each event took its own shape, but the same demand ran through all five. Governments must turn commitments into budgets people can see and use. Assistive technology must be affordable, available and built into everyday services, not treated as an extra. What follows is a short record of each event, and what it revealed about the state of assistive technology in that country.

Mr. Wabotlhe Chimidza

Chairperson, Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled



A guest examines a pair of telescopic glasses at the stakeholder breakfast in Johannesburg, 11 June 2026.

THE GAP, IN TWO NUMBERS

1
/10

people who need assistive
technology in low-income
countries can get it

9
/10

can get it in high-
income countries

EIGHT COUNTRIES

**Botswana · Eswatini · Lesotho · Malawi ·
Namibia · South Africa · Zambia · Zimbabwe**

LED AND FUNDED BY

SAFOD, with funding
from UNOPS and AT
Scale, the Global
Partnership for
Assistive
Technology.

ONE OF FIVE

World Day of

Me And My AT



Unlôck
The Everyday

#MeAndMyAT

Botswana

Three participants strike a pose at the World Day of Persons with Disabilities event. Together, we can unlock the everyday with assistive technology. #MeAndMyAT #UnlockTheEveryday

A stadium instead of a seminar room

The Botswana Federation of the Disabled and the University of Botswana turned the UB Stadium into what organisers called a living classroom, then carried the same message to Game City Mall in the afternoon. Participants travelled in from Gaborone and further afield, wearing matching Unlock the Everyday shirts.

The morning opened with prayer and a ten-minute aerobics warm-up. Wheelchair users moved to the rhythm; blind participants followed sound and touch.

Track events followed — wheelchair races with controlled racing lines, partially sighted runners paired with calling guides, and mixed relays where a dropped baton reset the whole team.

By afternoon the conversation had left the stadium gates. At the mall, a security guard tried a white cane and spoke about the fear of moving without sight.

A mother asked about seating support for her child with cerebral palsy.

Closing the day, BOFOD Chairperson Boikhutso Majang asked everyone present to carry what they had learned home.

LOCATOR

Gaborone

24°39'S 25°55'E

VENUES

UB Stadium and Game City Mall

PARTNERS

BOFOD · University of Botswana ·
SAFOD · Botswana Association of the
Blind and Partially Sighted



Participants step into the Me And My AT frame at the Unlock the Everyday stand, Game City Mall, Gaborone.

**“Ability defines
people, not disability.”**

HOPE NKANE · PRESIDENT, UB DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION

Progress on Provision of Assistive Technology in Lesotho.

- Lesotho has made significant steps in improving assistive technology provision, shifting from fragmented distribution to structured national frameworks.

Lesotho

Progress on the provision of assistive technology, presented to the national dialogue in Maseru, 4 June 2026.

Not whether the country needs devices, but who should build them

Mathabo Pama, Director of Disability Services, described a country moving from fragmented interventions towards coordinated provision: a National Priority Assistive Products List drawn up, a national policy and strategy formulated, and learning aids delivered to four pilot schools. The Physiotherapy Outreach Programme has trained people to make standing frames and classroom desks from recycled cardboard.

LNFOOD convened a high-level national dialogue with the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, the Lesotho Disability Advisory Council, the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations and Vodacom Foundation Lesotho, under the theme Strengthening Local Innovation and Technical Capacity for Sustainable Access to Assistive Technology.

The gaps were named just as plainly. Policies remain unoperationalised, funding is inadequate, and imported devices keep prices high. Delegates left with a roadmap to bring orthopaedics, device manufacture and repair into TVET curricula, turning vocational colleges into centres of production.

LOCATOR Maseru 29°19'S 27°29'E	FORMAT High-level national dialogue	PARTNERS LNFOOD · MGYSO · Lesotho Disability Advisory Council · LCN · Vodacom Foundation Lesotho
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“Sustainable change can only be achieved through collaboration.”

KENEUOE SEMPHI · VODACOM FOUNDATION LESOTHO

Government

Hon. Pitso Lesaoana reaffirmed support for local production through existing vocational training structures.

United Nations

Taija Kontinen-Sharp linked assistive technology to several Sustainable Development Goals.

TVET sector

Institutions offered to host orthopaedics workshops and adapt their curricula.

THREE OF FIVE



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RIGHTS CLINIC

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Malawi

A speaker addresses the symposium at the University of Malawi's Faculty of Law Disability Rights Clinic, Zomba, 4 June 2026.

Credit where it is due, then the gaps

FEDOMA and the University of Malawi’s Disability Rights Clinic marked the day with a symposium under the theme Assistive Technologies for a Dignified Life, bringing government officials into direct conversation with the people their policies affect.

It also acknowledged and supported the importance of assistive technology in improving the lives of persons with disabilities. Both the Persons with Disabilities Act and the National Disability Policy 2025 explicitly identify assistive technology as a national priority, recognising its vital role in promoting inclusion, independence and equal participation in society.

Then it named what is missing: no clear right to choose one’s own device, no accessibility standards in public procurement, no place for assistive technology in primary healthcare, and no measurable targets. Holiday timing thinned the turnout, but the day shifted something. Stakeholders left describing assistive technology less as equipment and more as a matter of human rights.

LOCATOR Zomba 15°23’S 35°19’E	VENUE The Law Boardroom, University of Malawi	PARTNERS FEDOMA · University of Malawi Disability Rights Clinic · MACODA · MACRA · SAFOD
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A delegate follows the presentation on legal and policy gaps in the Law Boardroom, Zomba.

“Assistive technology is a bridge that makes up for a lost or limited function.”

DISABILITY RIGHTS CLINIC · UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



FOUR OF FIVE

South Africa

A guest tries a braille note-taker during the forty-five-minute hands-on session at The Bannister Hotel, Johannesburg, 11 June 2026.

Twenty-nine people, four stories that were hard to forget

THISABILITY Newspaper and Disabled People South Africa hosted a stakeholder breakfast at The Bannister Hotel. Two South African Sign Language practitioners worked throughout the morning, and the whole event was streamed live.

Ingrid Wormsbächer of OTASA set out the clinical case with clarity and conviction, emphasising that assistive technology is most effective when the right device is matched to the individual, fitted correctly, and provided at the appropriate time.

She explained that, when these conditions are met, assistive products can do far more than address a functional limitation: they can transform a diagnosis into meaningful participation in everyday life.

The heart of the morning belonged to four speakers. Hazel Naicker described tools that changed as her needs changed. Thabiso Molopo explained how he obtained bionic prosthetics worth more than two million rand at no personal cost.

Palesa Mosiea gained telescopic glasses and, with them, the independence to drive her own car. Abongile Xhantini called her guide dog her superhero.

LOCATOR	VENUE	PARTNERS
Johannesburg 26°12'S 28°03'E	The Bannister Hotel · 29 guests	THISABILITY Newspaper · Disabled People South Africa · OTASA · Edit Micro · SAFOD



A device is held up for the room during the hands-on demonstration, The Bannister Hotel, Johannesburg.

“The technology exists. The challenge is getting the right device to the right person at the right time.”

A THEME OF THE JOHANNESBURG BREAKFAST

Zambia

Participants hold the Me And My AT frame outside the ZAFOD Secretariat, Lusaka, 4 June 2026.



Breakfast came with an agenda

ZAFOD and YADIZ gathered officials from the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, rehabilitation providers, researchers, journalists and persons with disabilities — hearing aid users, people with albinism, prosthetic users and wheelchair users — around one table.

A researcher opened the session by presenting evidence on the barriers that continue to limit access to assistive technology in Zambia. The presentation highlighted a range of challenges, including affordability, limited availability of products and services, gaps in awareness, and difficulties in reaching people in rural and underserved communities. Disacare, a local organisation involved in the manufacture, repair and maintenance of assistive devices, then shared its experiences from the field. Its representatives described the practical challenges of meeting demand while also highlighting the importance of local production and repair services.

The formal presentations naturally led into a lively question-and-answer session, with participants eager to explore the issues in greater depth. Questions from the audience covered topics ranging from funding and procurement to service provision and long-term sustainability. To ensure that the discussion reached beyond those physically present, the session was streamed live on Facebook, allowing people across the country and beyond to follow the proceedings, engage with the discussion, and contribute to the broader conversation on improving access to assistive technology in Zambia.

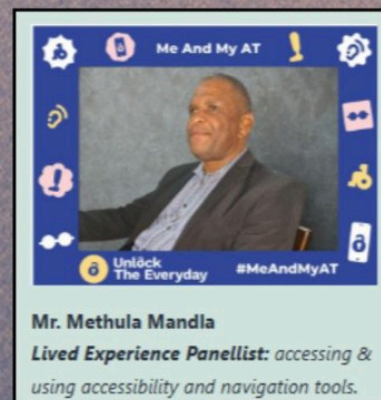
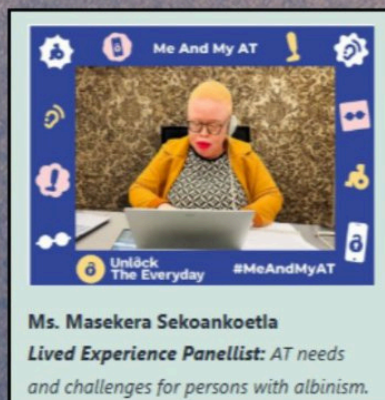
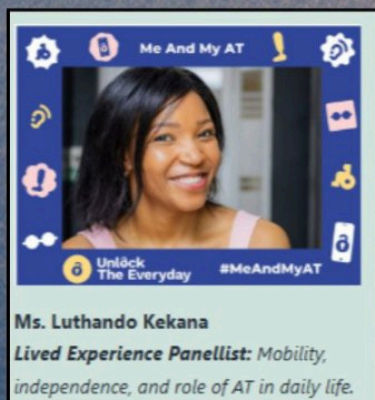
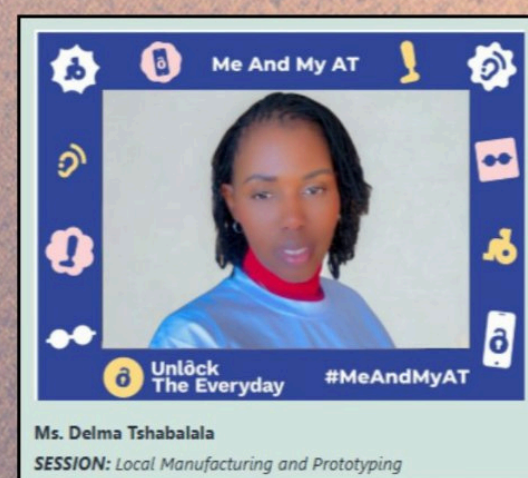
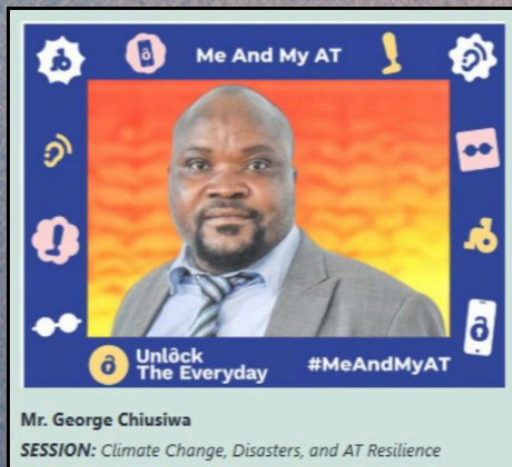
LOCATOR	VENUE	PARTNERS
Lusaka 15°25'S 28°17'E	The ZAFOD Secretariat	ZAFOD · YADIZ · Ministry of Community Development and Social Services · ZAPD · Disacare



Delegates at the ZAFOD Secretariat, Lusaka, during the high-level stakeholder breakfast.

“Cost remains the biggest barrier.”

THE FINDING PARTICIPANTS RETURNED TO MOST OFTEN



REGIONAL WEBINAR · 28 JULY 2026

Online · Southern Africa

Innovate, Include, Impact

SAFOD's Regional Inclusive Assistive Technology Webinar brought OPDs, AT users, government representatives, researchers, manufacturers, climate actors and development partners together online for two hours. Banthati Tshekoetsile moderated, with sign language interpretation throughout.

Dr George Mwika Kayange

Setting the scene: the AT ecosystem

Gaps in access, affordability and availability across the 16 SADC member states. A donated wheelchair sat unused for four years because it suited hospital floors, not rough terrain; wooden crutches arrived in a country with abundant timber. Policy problem, or mindset problem?

Dr Pick Nkomwa

Education and opportunities for young people

Ramps at public buildings, customised devices in remote villages, a new disability centre in Gwanda South, and outreach reaching over 1,000 persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

Ms Delma Tshabalala

Local manufacturing: wearing independence

Adaptive clothing as wearable AT. Magnetic fastenings, adjustable fittings and sensory-friendly fabrics need no specialist machinery, only close attention to how people dress.

Mr George Chiusiwa

Climate change, disasters and AT resilience

A flood, a cyclone or a long power cut can take away a mobility aid, a hearing device or a communication tool, usually with no system in place to replace it.

The people the technology is meant to serve

Ms Luthando Kekana
South Africa

A wheelchair user’s journey

A hospital wheelchair costs around R8,000 and is designed to move a patient down a corridor. A daily living wheelchair costs R100,000 or more and is designed to carry a person through their full life. Most people, medical aid administrators included, do not know the difference. Her message: whatever influence you hold, never stop talking about disability.

Mr Mandla Blessing Methula
Eswatini

Navigating the world with visual impairment

Born with 2% vision and blind since 2007, he described the navigation and accessibility tools he relies on daily, and the barriers created by technology designed without persons with visual impairment in mind.

Ms Makatleho Molotsi
Lesotho

Albinism, sunscreen and the law

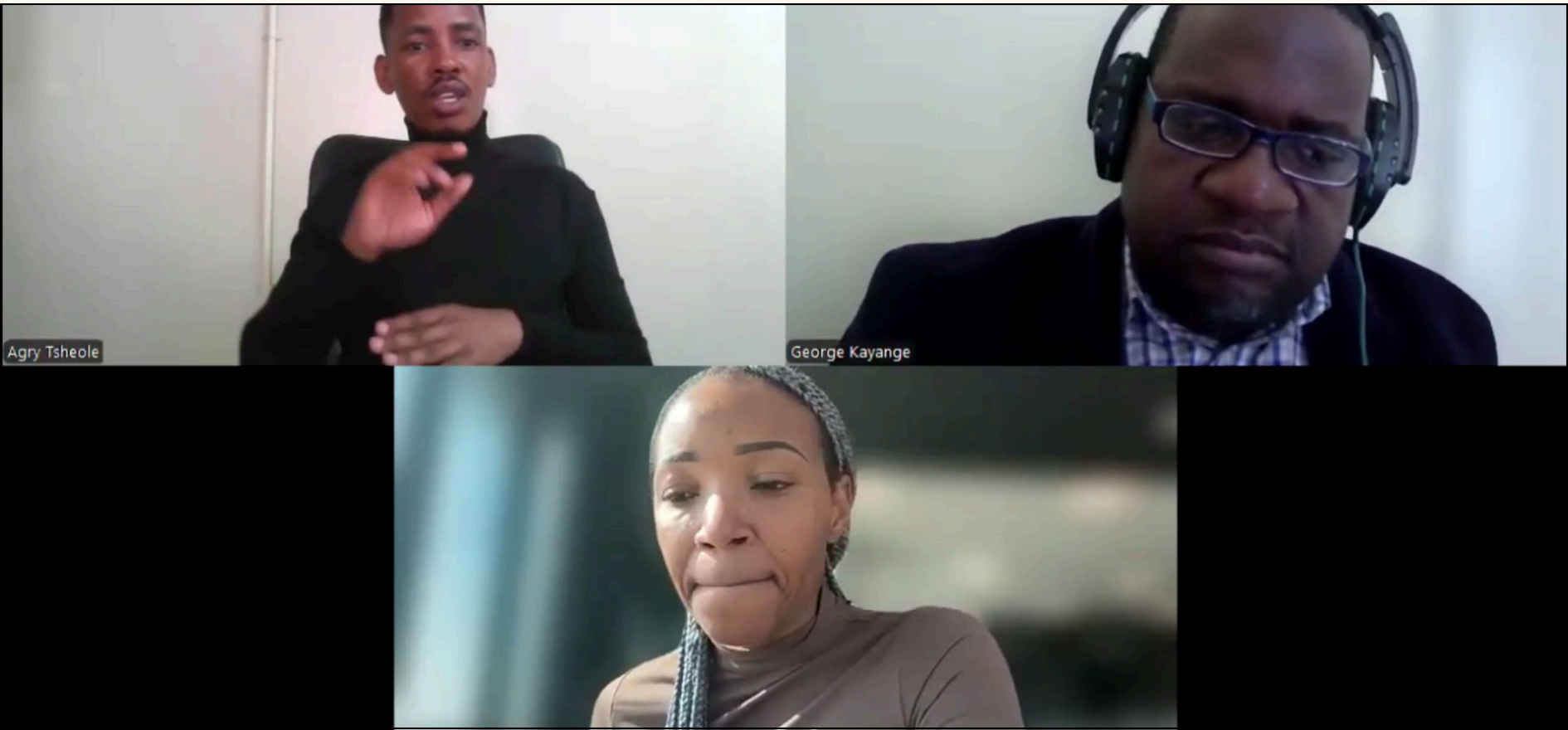
A Chief Legal Officer who has albinism and is the mother of two daughters with albinism, she set out the AT that persons with albinism need — skin protection products, vision aids and other tools that address both health and inclusion.

The webinar is part of a series

Speaker presentations are available to download, and future sessions will feature disability groups not represented on 28 July.

[LEARN MORE](#)

atwebinar.org



WHAT WE HEARD, ACROSS FIVE COUNTRIES

Five messages that echoed throughout every event

- 01** **Recognise assistive technology as a right**
Named in law, with the right to choose one's own device.

- 02** **Fund it in the national budget**
A dedicated line, not a residual, with measurable targets attached.

- 03** **Make it locally**
Manufacture, maintenance and repair taught in vocational institutions, supported by tax incentives.

- 04** **Build it into health and education**
Primary healthcare, procurement standards, and learning aids in classrooms.

- 05** **Keep the conversation public**
Stadiums, malls, radio, television and livestreams reach people that boardrooms cannot.



Access to Assistive Technology is a Human Right · Maseru

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

What governments and partners were asked to do

A Strengthen the legal and policy framework

Recognise access to assistive technology as a legal right, link it to the right to mobility, finalise national AT policies, and mainstream AT across national development frameworks.

B Improve financing and affordability

Increase allocations to disability financing mechanisms, including the Disability Trust Fund, maintain duty-free importation, and open local AT production to private-sector investment.

C Strengthen local production and innovation

Develop devices with innovation hubs, technical institutions and manufacturers; build AT into technical and vocational curricula; promote AT careers for persons with disabilities.

D Integrate AT into health and essential services

Make assessment, referral, provision and follow-up part of routine primary healthcare, coordinated across health, education, trade, training, finance and development partners.

E Put persons with disabilities at the centre

AT should be appropriate, affordable, accessible and responsive to individual need, with OPDs as active partners in policy, awareness, innovation and monitoring.

Ten things the campaign taught us

01 Access needs more than devices

Action is required across laws, financing, procurement, healthcare, skills, production and follow-up services.

03 Leadership needs collaboration

Ministries, OPDs, TVET institutions, the UN and the private sector all appear in the plan; no institution can act alone.

05 Financing remains the enabler

Even where policies exist, insufficient funding keeps appropriate AT out of reach.

07 Awareness must lead to opportunity

Campaigns matter most when they connect people to training, services, careers and devices.

09 Advocacy needs implementation

Awareness, advocacy, commitment, implementation and then monitoring — in that order.

02 Legal recognition sustains change

Where AT is a recognised right, people have a stronger basis for demanding services and holding duty-bearers to account.

04 Local solutions last longer

Partnerships with innovation institutions, technical schools and industry reduce dependence on imported devices.

06 Skills are part of the ecosystem

People are needed to design, produce, fit, maintain and support assistive technologies.

08 Accountability makes plans real

Outputs, indicators, timelines and named leads turn commitments into measurable responsibilities.

10 Users stay at the centre

AT should reach every person who needs it, shaped by the lived experience of users.



Unlock the Everyday

A regional campaign of the Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled, running across eight countries with funding from UNOPS and AT Scale.

CAMPAIGN

www.at-campaign.site

SAFOD

www.safod.net

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A SAFOD
CAMPAIGN REPORT