

Accessible Arab Region 2023: ICT For ALL



Bridging digital and accessibility divides while whilst leveraging Public, private partnerships

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Understanding the Barriers What are they?

“Assistive tech have emerged as powerful tools to bridge the gap between ability and accessibility. From mobility aids to communication devices “

Before delving into the necessity of co-creating assistive technologies, it is essential to grasp the barriers that impede PWDs’ full and equal participation in society. Access to education, employment, healthcare, and social activities is limited, spiraling into exclusion and inequalities.

these technologies have the potential to empower individuals with disabilities, unlocking their talents and facilitating their integration into various aspects of life. However, today’s landscape of assistive technologies faces significant challenges, including limited affordability, inadequate customization, and a lack of awareness about available solutions.

Assistive
Technologies

Understanding the Barriers



Barriers	
Access –	Basic everyday needs and rights can be time-consuming or impossible when access is not secured.
Affordability –	Solving the issue of affordability is at the heart of sustainable assistive tech business models.



Understanding the Barriers



Barriers	Public-Private-UN Partnerships
Relevance –	Assistive Tech need to meet the needs of users, have relevant content and consider factors such as spoken language, sign language, knowledge of local accessibility constraints and linkages to local services.
Safety and Security –	Ethical practices and privacy safeguards are not always designed inclusively. A commonly reported issue is where people with disabilities have been charged more than expected.
Knowledge and skills –	Digital literacy is the cornerstone of the digital inclusion of people with disabilities, including their confidence in using digital assistive tech.



The Necessity of Extensive Co-Creation Leveraging Public-Private-UN Partnerships

Co-creation, defined as **the collaborative process of innovation** where diverse stakeholders work together to generate new ideas and solutions, is the key to overcoming these challenges. In the context of developing assistive technologies, co-creation **involves actively engaging individuals with disabilities, alongside technologists, designers, policymakers, and healthcare professionals, in the entire innovation process — from ideation to implementation.**



What does this mean in practice?



As user-led innovators or as beta-users

User-Centric Design and grassroots innovations

Co-creation places **individuals with disabilities** at the center of the design process. Their lived experiences, unique perspectives, and daily challenges become invaluable sources of inspiration for developing technologies that genuinely meet their needs. By involving them in the design phase, we ensure that solutions are not only functional but also user-friendly, culturally sensitive, relevant, and tailored to diverse abilities. **User-Centric Design** is all about working closely with NGOs and CSOs supporting PWDs

Enhancing Accessibility

Accessibility is a cornerstone of inclusivity. Co-creation ensures that assistive technologies are not developed in isolation but in collaboration with those who understand the specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. By engaging diverse stakeholders, (from regulators to academia) we can create solutions that consider a wide range of disabilities, ensuring that the technology is adaptable and caters to various needs, whether visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive.

What does this mean in practice?



Open Innovation Ecosystems

that bring together academia, industry, government, and civil society. By breaking down silos and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, we can leverage the collective intelligence of diverse stakeholders. This approach not only accelerates the pace of technological innovation but also ensures that solutions are scalable, sustainable, and capable of addressing the complex challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.



Global Relevance & Cultural Sensitivity

Recognizing that disability is a global issue, co-creation ensures that solutions are relevant across different cultures and contexts. By involving individuals with disabilities from diverse backgrounds, we can develop technologies that consider cultural nuances, linguistic diversity, and regional variations in accessibility needs. This global perspective not only enriches the quality of innovations but also promotes a more inclusive and interconnected world.

Affordability and Scalability

co-creation model addresses the issue of affordability by incorporating cost considerations from the outset. By involving individuals with disabilities in the decision-making process, we can prioritize solutions that are not only effective but also economically viable. Moreover, co-creation facilitates the development of scalable technologies, ensuring that innovations can reach a broader audience and have a lasting impact on a global scale.

Building Open Innovation Ecosystems

Key challenges

Ensuring Inclusivity

Co-creation efforts must be mindful of ensuring the representation of individuals with diverse disabilities. Inclusivity is key to avoiding unintentional biases in the design process and ensuring that the resulting technologies address the varied needs of the global disability community.



Balancing skills

Striking the right balance between the expertise of technologists, designers, and individuals with disabilities is crucial. Co-creation requires effective communication and collaboration to leverage the strengths of each stakeholder group, ensuring that the final products are both technologically advanced and user-friendly.

Addressing Resource Disparities

Co-creation initiatives may face resource disparities among participating individuals and organizations. Efforts should be made to bridge these gaps, ensuring that the benefits of co-created technologies are accessible to individuals in both developed and developing regions.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

Building Open Innovation Ecosystems

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The synergy of public, private, and UN agency partnerships is the driving force behind the success of innovation ecosystems that prioritize inclusivity and accessibility. **By tapping into users-led innovations, the collective intelligence, resources, and expertise of diverse stakeholders, we can usher in a new era of assistive technologies that empower individuals with disabilities, break down barriers, and pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable global society.** I urge us all to embrace open innovation ecosystems and co-creation as a catalyst for positive change, ensuring that no one is left behind in our pursuit of an inclusive future.





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