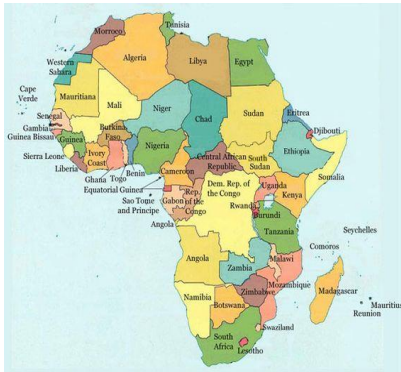




Assistive technology is a powerful change agent yet is a rapidly evolving and complex field. It only takes a small group of committed, innovative people to serve as 'game-changers'. Imagine the possibilities when individual champions collaborate, building an international network and community of practice for the African continent....in this way contributing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



Products, Provision, Personnel, Policy Synergies & People

PRODUCTS

AFRICA: inequitable supply, costly imports, poor environmental /cultural appropriateness; lack of support for local innovation and scaling of locally made products.

AUSTRALIA: concerns are imports, cost factors, lack of local and culturally relevant products and production of AT.

PROVISION

AFRICA: lack of integrated service provision, funding options do not match APL, do not meet real costs and do not provide for the needs of users.

AUSTRALIA: calling for good practice principles in service delivery, developing, strengthening and supporting assistive technology research, practice and profile, locally and globally.

PERSONNEL

AFRICA: pockets of knowledge have great potential to be connected, extended and enhanced.

AUSTRALIA: promoting specialized skills and knowledge in assistive and rehabilitation technologies, and recognizing non-professional pathways and user expertise.

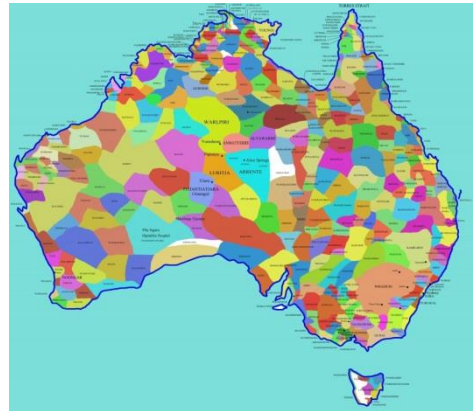
POLICY

AFRICA: need to move from medically-based systems to rights-based, social justice and capability-based policies.

AUSTRALIA: need to influence policy and sector reforms to embed good practice and equitable service delivery.

PEOPLE

AFRICA and AUSTRALIA: there is consensus regarding the imperative of 'championing the rights and voice of the user' in all aspects of the 5 P's as well as in the area of research.



Implications for other aspects of the Global Research Agenda

The WHO GATE initiative www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/en/ and the WHO GREAT Summit www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/great_summit/en/ both support global collaboration, with a view to leveraging good ideas.

This initiative has the potential for increasing access to AT which is an urgent global necessity – working to close the gap between need and unmet need and speaks to at least two of the five priority research themes identified in the GATE Research Agenda.

Strategies to share and build global capacity based on this work

1. Commence a cross-country/continental dialogue between key AT stakeholders
2. Formalise a Memorandum of Understanding to begin visioning and resource-sharing
3. Build 'flagship' exchange activities e.g. AT education
4. Establish a professional body in South Africa - AAAT
5. Invite global colleagues to join in...

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Synergies: Continental and Contextual

AFRICA and AUSTRALIA are large, sparsely populated continents with harsh climates and diverse populations.

AFRICA has pockets of AT expertise but as yet no peak body or community of practice in place.

AUSTRALIA commenced an AT peak (representative) body and community of practice (The Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association, ARATA) 25 years ago.

Our vision

Our GREAT continents have GREAT potential for mutual learning and exchange.

AUSTRALIA: ARATA has expertise in systemic advocacy to influence government policy, and is active at the research/policy/practice interface, with a particular focus on co-production with AT user experts. A biennial conference and an active COP listserv are in place.

AFRICA: some higher education institutions are leading the way in driving the AT agenda forward.

AFRICA: excellent initiatives and interventions abound such as the AT-Info-Map and CLASPS projects, AfriNEAD network, EA centre of excellence and innovative training models.

AFRICA: has significant practice wisdom around indigenous populations and culturally appropriate AT provision. A history of innovation in the face of adversity holds many potential learnings for the ARATA community.