AT2030 Venture Spotlight Series

Scaling assistive technology innovation

This AT2030 Spotlight Series profiles growth-stage assistive technology businesses developing practical technologies and business models to meet unmet access needs at scale. Each case study explores the problem they are addressing, the model they are building, the evidence behind their work, and how AT2030, GDI Hub and GDI Accelerate are supporting their growth trajectory.

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AT2030

Global Disability Innovation Hub

GDI Hub Accelerate

Participant Assistive Products

Affordable, durable wheelchairs designed for real-world conditions.

>$1M
Annual revenue from multiple large customers

6,000
Units sold per year, growing 30-50% annually

50,000
Annual production capacity

Participant Assistive Products is a wheelchair manufacturer focused on designing mobility devices for real-world conditions. Their approach centres on durability, repairability, and affordability, with products built to function reliably in the environments where they are used.

The Problem

Wheelchair provision in many lower-income markets is shaped by a combination of cost, fit, and follow-up. While devices may be available, they are often too expensive, poorly fitted to the user, or not built to withstand local terrain and daily use.

Donated chairs frequently do not match the user's body or environment, and when devices break, repair options are limited or nonexistent. As a result, many wheelchairs are abandoned or used in ways that lead to preventable complications.

The challenge is not only access, but the mismatch between products, users, and the environments in which they are used, leaving mobility constrained even when devices are technically available.

The Innovation

Participant designs wheelchairs specifically for the conditions in which they are used, including varied terrain, limited repair infrastructure, and significant cost constraints. The focus is on making products that can withstand daily use, be maintained locally, and remain affordable without compromising core functionality.

This approach extends beyond design into manufacturing. Increasing production volume lowers unit costs, improving both affordability and margins. That relationship between scale and cost is central to how the model works.

Why it Works - Delivery Model

Participant sells across multiple channels, including distributors, clinics, NGOs, and government programmes, each with different expectations around pricing, procurement, and service. The model is built to operate across these segments. Products are priced to remain accessible for NGO and public-sector buyers, while maintaining a level of quality that enables entry into higher-income markets.

Sales in countries such as Spain and the UK are growing and play an important role in overall profitability. This, in turn, supports more accessible pricing in lower-income contexts.

At the same time, fitting, repair, and follow-up remain dependent on partners. The product alone is not sufficient; long-term use depends on the availability of service infrastructure.

Evidence and Traction

Participant has crossed $1 million in annual revenue, with sales of around 6,000 units per year and consistent growth of 30 to 50 percent. A contract in Zambia worth approximately $300,000 demonstrates that institutional buyers are willing to engage at scale.

Production capacity now exceeds 50,000 units annually, providing significant headroom for growth. The challenge is less about whether the model can scale, and more about how quickly demand, distribution, and operations can move together.

There is also a visible shift in where growth is coming from. Higher-income markets are becoming more central to new product development and sales, while demand from NGO channels continues to build on existing momentum.

GDI Hub Support and Engagement

Engagement with GDI Hub has focused on bringing more clarity to the balance between mission and market. This has included refining how different customer segments are prioritised, and how pricing and sales strategy can support both accessibility and profitability. A key insight has been the need to treat these as distinct market segments, each with its own requirements, pricing dynamics, and pathways to scale.

Work has also supported a clearer commercial direction, with increased focus on higher-income markets for new product development and growth, while maintaining momentum in NGO and public-sector channels.

Wider Implication

The model shows that affordability in assistive technology is not achieved in isolation, but through how markets are structured. Access in lower-income contexts is often enabled by revenue generated in higher-income segments.

Designing for both requires deliberate choices across product, pricing, and distribution. When aligned, this creates a pathway to scale that supports both access and financial sustainability.

GDI Accelerate is GDI Hub's platform for strengthening the systems that help inclusive innovation reach scale. The 'GDI Accelerate Growth Sprint' supports high-potential growth-stage assistive and accessible technology ventures through diagnosis, strategy refinement and investment-readiness planning, generating tailored support plans within GDI Accelerate's market-access and enterprise-strengthening model.

Durability, repairability, and affordability, with products built to function reliably in the environments where they are used.

Bios

Keoke
Co-founder & CEO

Keoke is co-founder and CEO of Participant Assistive Products, which is the first medical device company registered as a Benefit Corporation. The mission is to develop excellent and affordable products for people with disabilities so that they can increase their social and economic participation. Keoke brings a human centered approach to design and to business management so that unserved populations can participate. Participant's flagship product is Cub, an all terrain wheelchair for children with Cerebral Palsy.

Keoke's first encounter with disability was while being cared for by his grandmother. "Her cane and wheelchair were bulky and did not work well for her daily activities. Getting outdoors to her beloved pecan tree was quite challenging." His quest to make a global impact in the assistive products industry began after his MBA with a role as Marketing Director of Whirlwind Wheelchair. Pursuing that quest, he has worked in seventeen countries with roles in marketing, supply chain, sales, and product development.