



# Innovation Ecosystem Development Intervention: Catalysing an Assistive Technology Ecosystem for Sport in Southern Africa

Para Sport Against Stigma 2.0

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# Executive Summary

## What this paper shows

Para Sport Against Stigma (PSAS) began as a visibility led intervention, using sport as a way to challenge stigma associated with disability. Early assumptions within the programme reflected a common approach within awareness raising initiatives: that increasing visibility and shifting perceptions would contribute to greater inclusion and participation.

While this work demonstrated that visibility can generate recognition and interest, it also revealed the limitations of approaches centred primarily on awareness and attitudes. Participation in Para and disability sport is shaped not only by visibility, but by the wider systems that enable access to assistive technology, transport, facilities, and structured opportunities for participation. Where these are absent, participation remains limited regardless of visibility.

This paper argues that assistive technology should be understood as core participation infrastructure for disability sport. It reframes PSAS as an early-stage innovation ecosystem intervention, showing how visibility and awareness-led work, coupled with communication for social change approaches, can contribute to broader system change over time.

## What PSAS demonstrates

Across its two phases, PSAS has moved from visibility to system engagement.

- Phase One (2020-24) demonstrated how locally led storytelling can increase attention, while also highlighting the limits of reach without access.
- Phase Two (2024-26) introduced more deliberate approaches to making assistive technology visible, including demonstration sports and Games-based activation.
- This led to increased interest in equipment-based sports, revealing latent demand among athletes, coaches, and policymakers.
- It also exposed structural constraints, particularly in relation to sourcing, affordability, and maintenance of equipment.



Engagement with the African Union Sports Council Region 5 and the Inter-Ministerial Forum (July 2025) brought assistive technology into policy discussion for the first time at a regional level. Together, these developments show how visibility can act as an entry point, but must be connected to wider system development in order to influence participation.

## Priorities for investment

The experience of PSAS points to four areas for future investment:

- **Strengthening regional coordination**

Aligning production, demand, and distribution across countries to improve efficiency and access.

- **Scaling locally appropriate innovation**

Supporting the development and expansion of lower-cost, context-specific equipment.

- **Developing repair and maintenance systems**

Ensuring equipment remains usable over time through local technical capacity.

- **Embedding assistive technology within participation pathways**

Integrating access into schools, community sport, and youth competition structures. Across all areas, storytelling and visibility play a cross-cutting role. Rather than functioning as standalone activities, they support demand, influence policy, and connect actors across the system.

## Overall message

PSAS demonstrates that visibility can act as a starting point, but not an endpoint. Lasting change requires investment in the systems that enable participation.

The opportunity is to move from isolated initiatives towards coordinated approaches that can support access to assistive technology for sport at scale.

## 1.0 Introduction

Para Sport Against Stigma (PSAS) was designed with a broad and exploratory premise: how could Para sport be used as a tool to challenge stigma associated with disability? Stigma was assumed to be a problem of individual attitudes. Across its first phase, the work concentrated on increasing the visibility of athletes and stories within local contexts, testing how narrative, media, and community engagement could shift perceptions.

This approach generated important insights into the role of visibility. Increased exposure can influence how disability is understood and create points of recognition and engagement. However, these effects were not consistently associated with changes in participation. In practice, visibility alone did not establish pathways into sport or expand access to the resources required to take part. This suggests that while visibility and awareness play a role, it operates within wider system conditions that ultimately shape participation outcomes.

As the programme evolved, a more fundamental constraint became clear. Participation in Para and disability sport is not only shaped by attitudes or awareness. It is shaped by structural conditions and infrastructure. In many cases, participation is simply not possible without access to appropriate assistive technology. Where that technology is unavailable, unaffordable, or unevenly distributed, participation remains limited regardless of visibility.

This paper sets out a reframing of PSAS. Rather than positioning the programme solely as an awareness raising or stigma reduction intervention, it presents PSAS as an early stage innovation ecosystem intervention for assistive technology in sport. It shows how a communication for social change approach, when extended over time, can contribute to agenda setting, stimulate demand, surface existing innovation, and begin to connect fragmented actors within a wider system.

Drawing on evidence from Southern Africa, alongside emerging research on disability sport systems and assistive technology access, the paper argues that assistive technology should be understood as core participation infrastructure, rather than a specialist or elite concern. It also sets out the implications for future investment, particularly the need to move from isolated initiatives towards coordinated, regional approaches that can support scale.



## **2.0 Reframing the Challenge: From Stigma to Participation Infrastructure**

Building on this, early PSAS work was shaped by a wider programme assumption that stigma is a primary barrier to assistive technology access. Within PSAS, this was explored through the lens of sport participation, providing a context to examine how stigma interacts with the conditions that enable or constrain access. This assumption shaped early interventions, with a focus on increasing visibility through storytelling, media partnerships, and localised campaigns.

While this work was effective in raising awareness, it also revealed its limits. Increased visibility did not lead to a corresponding increase in participation. In many cases, interest and engagement grew, but opportunities to take part did not. This reflects wider findings that broadcast and reach-centred approaches do not necessarily translate into meaningful engagement or behaviour change when disconnected from local systems and opportunities (Noske-Turner et al., 2025).

This gap points to a deeper issue. Stigma is not only social or attitudinal. It is also produced and reinforced by the way systems are structured. Where there are limited opportunities to participate, where equipment is not available, and where pathways into sport are unclear, exclusion becomes normalised. In this context, stigma is both a cause and a consequence of limited access.

Evidence from PSAS aligns with wider research on disability sport systems, which highlights persistent structural barriers to participation, including limited access to equipment, weak development pathways, and under-resourced national systems (Jaarsma, E.A. et al., 2014; Legg, D. et al. 2022). These constraints are particularly visible in low-resource settings, where the cost and availability of assistive technology plays a defining role in determining who can take part.

At the same time, global and national policy frameworks increasingly recognise the importance of access. In Malawi, more recent disability legislation has strengthened provisions relating to participation, assistive technology, and adapted sport, reflecting a broader shift towards rights-based approaches to inclusion (Hogan Lovells, 2026). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities places clear emphasis on participation in sport and physical activity, supported by access to appropriate assistive technology (United Nations, 2006).

However, recent analysis shows that these commitments are not consistently translated into practice. While assistive technology is widely referenced, only a small proportion of countries explicitly link it to sport participation (Geppert, A. et al., 2025).

Taken together, these perspectives point to a necessary shift. Assistive technology in sport should not be seen as an optional add-on or a specialist input for elite athletes. It should be understood as part of the basic infrastructure required to enable participation. Without it, pathways into sport remain closed for many.

## **3.0 Phase One Insight: The Limits of Visibility Without Assistive Technology**

During its first phase (2020-2024), PSAS focused on increasing the visibility of Para sport within local contexts. Through a series of experiments and campaigns, the programme tested different approaches to storytelling, working with broadcasters, athletes, and communities to create and share content that reflected local realities.

This work demonstrated that it is possible to generate attention and engagement, particularly through locally led content that reflects relevant contexts and experiences. However, access to

broadcast itself remains uneven. With only 11.6% of households in Malawi owning a television, and just 5.4% in rural areas, broadcast alone cannot be relied upon to drive participation (Noske-Turner et al., 2025).

A consistent pattern emerged: the majority of athletes featured in these stories were participating in sports that did not require assistive technology. Athletics for visually impaired athletes, for example, was prominent, as were other disciplines where entry is possible without specialised equipment. This reflects a broader participation pattern across the region. Where sports require significant investment in equipment and infrastructure, such as wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, or racing chairs, participation is far more limited. In many countries, these sports are either absent or only accessible to a very small number of athletes.

These patterns are reinforced by the way Para sport is represented through global broadcast systems. The expansion of Paralympic broadcasting across Sub-Saharan Africa has increased visibility, but this has been shaped by structural and production constraints, including limited engagement from national broadcasters and restricted access to localised content (Pullen et al., 2024). In this context, visibility is uneven and often disconnected from local realities, with limited representation of African athletes in certain disciplines reflecting wider inequalities in participation.

As a result, early visibility gains did not extend to assistive technology. While audiences were exposed to Para sport, they were not necessarily exposed to the role that equipment plays in enabling participation. Nor did visibility translate into increased access to that equipment. This led to a critical insight for the programme. If the aim is to increase both the visibility and uptake of assistive technology in and through sport, this cannot be left to chance. It must be designed into interventions from the outset.

In practical terms, this means moving beyond general visibility towards more intentional approaches. It requires creating opportunities for audiences, athletes, and system actors to engage with assistive technology directly, whether through demonstration sports, community-level activities, or targeted storytelling. Without this intentionality, there is a risk that visibility efforts reinforce existing participation patterns rather than expanding them. Sports that are already accessible continue to grow, while those that depend on assistive technology remain marginal. This insight shaped the direction of the second phase of PSAS, where assistive technology was brought into focus more deliberately as part of both storytelling and system engagement.

#### **4.0 Designing for Visibility: Bringing Assistive Technology into Focus**

In response to this gap, Phase Two (2024-26) introduced a more deliberate approach to making assistive technology visible. If assistive technology was to play a meaningful role in expanding participation, it needed to be made visible, not as an abstract concept, but as something tangible, relevant, and connected to locally relevant opportunities in sport. This shift was first explored through *Beyond This Land*, the first African-led promotional film for the Paralympic Games.

The process of developing the film brought into focus both the potential and the constraints within existing narrative structures. While it was possible to centre African athletes and perspectives, this was shaped by uneven access to footage, limited representation of equipment-based sports, and restricted control over storytelling.

Building on this, the approach evolved further during the African Union Sports Council Region 5 Youth Games in 2025. Here, assistive technology was integrated more intentionally into the campaign design. Alongside coverage of sports that did not require specialised equipment (Visually Impaired and special Olympics athletics), demonstration sports such as wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis were introduced as part of the broader storytelling strategy.

These demonstration activities played a specific role. They acted as entry points for conversation, exposing audiences, athletes, and system actors to forms of participation that were not widely visible in the region. They also made the role of assistive technology more explicit, linking equipment directly to the possibility of taking part. This approach worked through existing regional sport structures, using the visibility and momentum of the Games to introduce new elements into the participation landscape. In doing so, it began to shift perceptions of what Para and disability sport could be included, while also raising practical questions about access, cost, and availability of equipment.

A key outcome of this phase was the activation of demand. Interest in equipment-based sports extended beyond athletes to include coaches, organisers, and policymakers, reflecting a broader shift in perception. This suggests that demand for assistive technology in sport is not absent, but latent, emerging in response to exposure and opportunity. As possibilities become visible, expectations begin to evolve. However, this process also brought structural constraints into clearer view. As interest intensified, so too did the visibility of challenges related to sourcing, maintenance, and affordability. In this context, visibility did not resolve barriers, but exposed them more fully, highlighting the conditions that continue to shape access and participation.





## 5.0 From Visibility to Agenda Setting: The Inter-Ministerial Moment

The growing focus on assistive technology during the Youth Games created an opening for engagement beyond the level of individual projects or programmes. This was most clearly demonstrated through the Inter-Ministerial Forum held alongside the Games in July 2025.

For the first time, assistive technology for sport participation was brought explicitly into discussions at ministerial level within the region. This marked an important shift. Rather than being positioned solely within sport development or disability advocacy, assistive technology was framed as part of a broader participation agenda, with links to youth development, education, and social inclusion.

This shift was reflected in the outcomes of the forum, where assistive technology for sport was included within the official declaration. While this does not in itself guarantee implementation, it signals recognition at policy level and creates a basis for further action. This aligns with wider calls to move beyond fragmented approaches and towards more integrated, system-level responses that connect policy, delivery, and innovation as reflected in the forum declaration (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025).

The forum also provided a platform to surface existing initiatives across the region. These included organisations and programmes working on different aspects of assistive technology for sport, from design and production to distribution and grassroots access. Examples included Jumping Kids and Shonaquip in South Africa, the development of running frames (Framing Mobility) emerging from Stellenbosch University, emerging frugal design work on throwing frames and powerlifting benches in Malawi (MAP), sport product distribution models linked to Motivation Africa, and manufacturing initiatives such as Alive and Kicking in Kenya.

Individually, these initiatives make important contributions. Taken together, they point to a broader landscape of activity that remains largely uncoordinated and only partially visible. Much of this work has developed within specific contexts, with limited opportunity for connection beyond them. Engagement during this phase brought elements of that landscape into view. What emerged was not a connected network, but a clearer understanding of who is involved, what exists, and where gaps remain. Rather than convening a shared platform, this process helped to identify where linkages might form and where coordination could develop.

Attention begins to shift as a result. The focus moves away from individual solutions towards the conditions that shape how they can extend or connect. Questions arise around how innovation can move across contexts, how access might expand beyond national boundaries, and how different parts of the system could align more effectively. Creating spaces for exchange, such as regional forums, is a logical next step.

This reflects a broader pattern in policy implementation, where commitments to inclusion are not matched by the mechanisms required to deliver them. While global frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognise the importance of participation in sport, the integration of assistive technology within sport systems remains limited. Analysis of State Party reports across Europe shows that although assistive technology is widely referenced, only 16.1% of countries link it explicitly to sport participation (Gepperts et al., 2024).

In this context, the role of PSAS is to help surface these dynamics and support the conditions under which more coordinated approaches can begin to emerge.

## **6.0 Mapping the Landscape: Innovation Without Coordination**

As attention to assistive technology in sport has increased, a clearer picture of the existing landscape has begun to emerge. There are examples of innovation across the region, spanning

design, production, and distribution. However, these efforts are unevenly distributed and rarely connected in ways that support scale.

In South Africa, there is a relatively strong base of production and design expertise. Organisations such as Shonaquip alongside university-led initiatives including the development of running frames, demonstrate the potential for locally grounded innovation. These initiatives combine technical knowledge with an understanding of user needs, often working closely with athletes and communities.

In Kenya, manufacturing models such as Motivation Rough Terrain and Alive and Kicking show how locally produced equipment can be developed and distributed at scale within specific sports contexts. While not focused exclusively on disability sport, these models offer insight into how production and distribution can be aligned.

In Malawi, emerging work on locally designed throwing frames and Para powerlifting benches reflects a different approach, centred on frugal innovation. Here, the focus is on developing lower cost solutions that respond to local constraints, including access to materials, repair capacity, and affordability.

Alongside these examples, there are also distribution-focused models, such as those linked to Motivation Africa and Chairman (South Africa), which provide access to equipment produced elsewhere. While these models play an important role, their reach remains limited, and they are often dependent on external supply chains.

Taken together, these examples point to a fragmented system. Innovation is taking place, but it is not supported by coordinated mechanisms for scaling, distribution, or sustained access. Production is concentrated in certain locations, while demand is spread across multiple countries. Procurement tends to happen at national level, limiting opportunities to aggregate demand and reduce costs. Repair and maintenance systems are underdeveloped, affecting the longevity and usability of equipment.

These challenges are consistent with broader findings in disability and development research, which highlight the importance of system level coordination in enabling access to assistive technology (WHO & UNICEF, 2022). Without such coordination, even well-designed innovations struggle to reach those who need them.

This observation suggests that the primary constraint is not a lack of ideas or technical capacity. It is the absence of mechanisms that connect different parts of the system. Addressing this requires a shift in focus, from supporting individual initiatives towards enabling collective approaches that can operate across national boundaries.

## **7.0 From Fragmentation to Early Coordination: Signals of Ecosystem Development**

While the assistive technology landscape for sport in Southern Africa remains fragmented, recent developments suggest early signs of coordination at both regional and national levels. These shifts are still emerging, but they indicate movement from isolated activity towards more connected approaches.

At a regional level, the African Union Sports Council Region 5 has made a clear commitment to expanding the role of assistive technology within its Youth Games programme. This includes the introduction of additional sports that require equipment, alongside a stated intention to explore how access to participation-level technology can be strengthened across member countries.

This is a notable shift. Regional Games have traditionally reflected existing participation patterns, which tend to favour sports that require limited or no equipment. By committing to include sports that depend on assistive technology, Region 5 is not only responding to current demand, but also shaping future pathways. It signals an understanding that participation does not expand without deliberate investment in the conditions that make it possible.

Alongside this, there is growing recognition of the need for regional approaches to access. Early discussions have begun around shared procurement, cross-border distribution, and the potential for collective investment. While these ideas are still at an exploratory stage, they reflect an important change in perspective. There is an emerging view that solutions may be more effective when designed and delivered at a regional scale, especially in sport and physical activity.

At a national level, similar shifts can be seen. In Malawi, stakeholders across sport, education, and disability sectors are beginning to work more closely to address gaps in participation. This includes efforts to develop locally appropriate equipment through frugal innovation approaches, as well as exploring how access can be expanded within schools and community settings.

These developments are significant not because they represent fully formed systems, but because they demonstrate alignment. Different actors are beginning to work towards shared objectives, with a clearer understanding of the role that assistive technology plays in enabling participation.

This reflects a transition point. The system is moving from a state of fragmentation, where initiatives operate in isolation, towards early coordination, where connections between actors begin to form. Sustaining and strengthening this shift will be critical for long term impact.

## 8.0 The Participation Gap: Evidence from Pathways and Performance

The implications of limited access to assistive technology are visible across the participation pathway, from grassroots engagement through to elite competition.

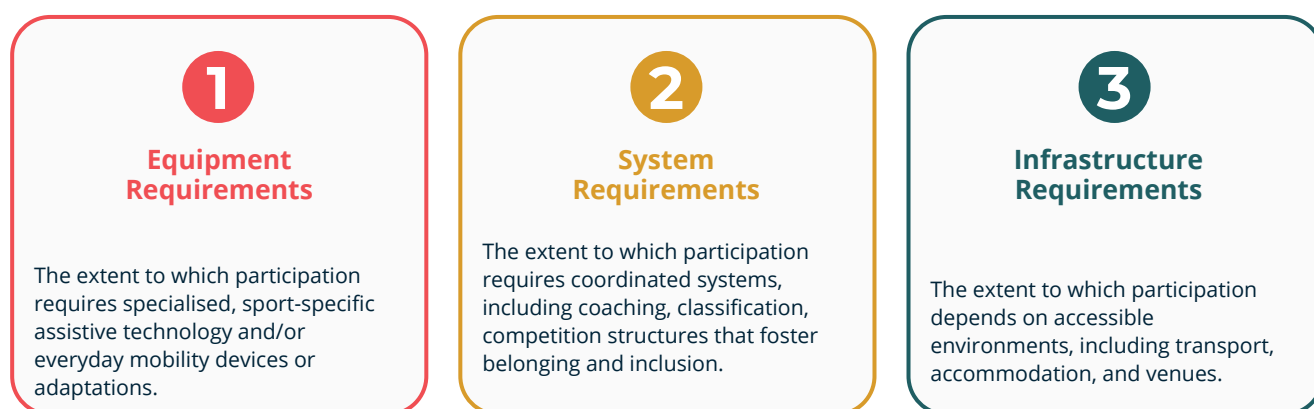
At the community and school level, opportunities for children with disabilities to take part in sport remain uneven. In many contexts, physical education programmes are not adapted to include children with different needs, and appropriate equipment is rarely available. As a result, participation is often limited to informal or improvised activities, with few structured pathways into organised sport.

Examples from Malawi illustrate both the challenge and the potential for change. Local adaptations of the International Paralympic Committee's I'mPOSSIBLE programme have demonstrated how inclusive approaches can be introduced within school settings, using modified equipment and locally relevant delivery models. These efforts show that participation can be expanded, but they also highlight the constraints that exist when access to appropriate technology is limited.

These early-stage barriers are not experienced equally across all sports. Some forms of participation require minimal adaptation or equipment, while others depend on specialised assistive technology, coordinated support systems, and accessible environments. As a result, the conditions required to enter and sustain participation vary significantly across disciplines.

### Structural Barriers to Participation in Para Sport

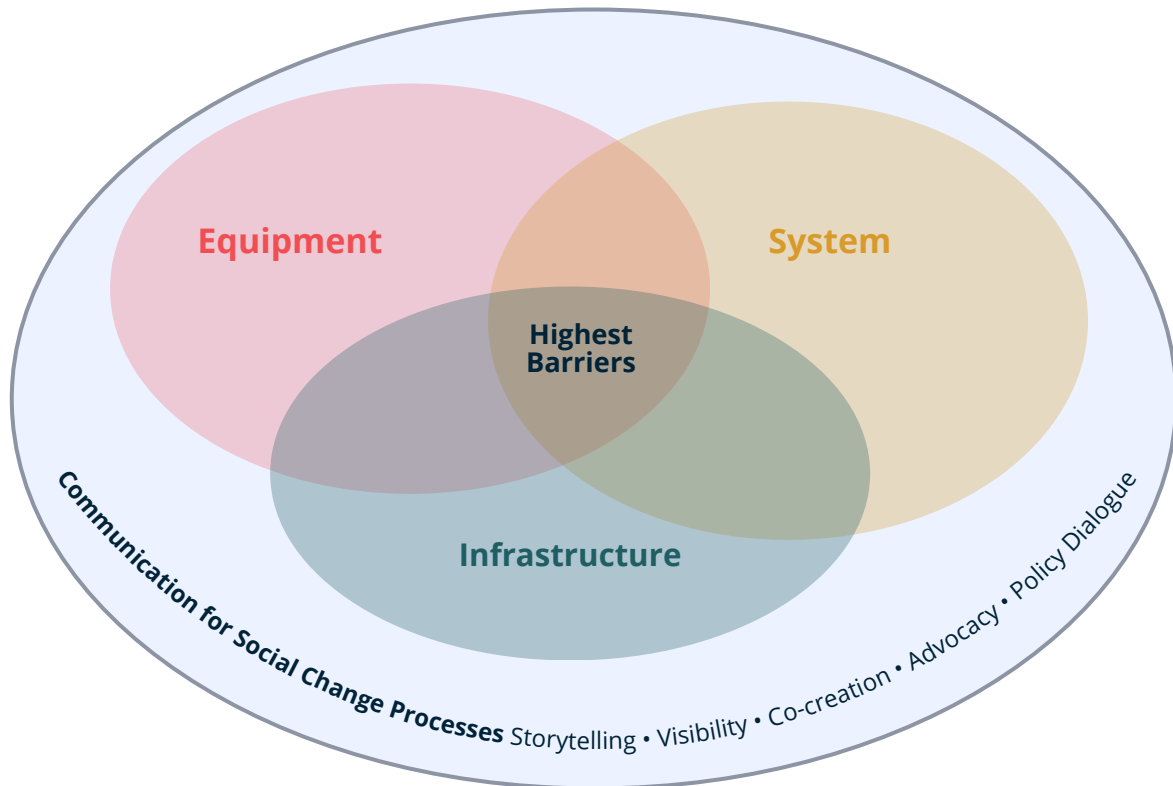
Structural barriers to participation in Para sport can be understood across three interrelated dimensions:



Sports that combine all three dimensions present the highest barriers to entry, particularly in contexts where resources and systems are limited.

Figure 1. Structural barriers to participation in Para sport across three interrelated dimensions.

**Communication for social change processes help surface barriers, strengthen coordination, and connect actors across fragmented systems.**



*Figure 2. Structural barriers to participation in Para sport emerge through overlapping equipment, system, and infrastructure requirements, shaped by wider communication for social change processes.*

Sports that combine equipment, system, and infrastructure requirements present the highest barriers to entry, particularly in contexts where resources and coordinated systems remain limited. These conditions help explain uneven participation patterns across both grassroots and elite sport.

At the elite level, participation patterns reflect these constraints. Representation is often concentrated in sports that allow entry with more flexible system and equipment requirements, while participation in disciplines that depend on specialised assistive technology and coordinated systems remains comparatively limited. Where athletes do compete in these disciplines, access to equipment is often achieved through limited and highly individualised pathways, including donations, international support, or personal networks. This creates uneven opportunities and makes sustained participation difficult.

These structural constraints are reflected at grassroots level and in patterns of participation at the highest levels of competition. African nations account for approximately 27% of National Paralympic Committee membership, yet only 7% of athletes at the Paris Paralympic Games were from the continent. Across disability sport systems more broadly, Africa contributes less than 10% of global Para athlete participation.

This underrepresentation is particularly visible in system-dependent disciplines. Wheelchair rugby, for example, has historically been dominated by a small number of countries, with no African teams represented at the Paralympic Games. Participation in wheelchair basketball and other equipment-intensive sports also remains limited across the continent.

In some cases, athletes enter major competitions through wildcard systems, rather than through fully developed qualification pathways. While this provides important opportunities for representation, it also reflects underlying gaps in system development.

These patterns point to a deeper issue. Participation in Para sport is shaped not only by individual ability or motivation, but by the systems that enable entry, progression, and sustained participation over time.

Participation in Para sport can be understood as a pathway through a wider system. Most individuals who enter sport remain at participation and development levels, engaging through schools, community programmes, recreation, or local competition. Only a small number progress into high performance environments and international competition. Yet public visibility of Para sport is often shaped by the equipment seen at elite level, where highly specialised racing chairs, prosthetics, and customised wheelchairs are associated with performance and international success.

### Participation pathways in Para sport are shaped by access to assistive technology at multiple stages



#### Assistive Technology Barriers

**★ Entry Barrier**  
**Access to foundational assistive technology**  
 Affordable and context appropriate equipment enables entry into physical education, recreation, and community sport.

**★ Progression Barrier**  
**Access to sport-specific assistive technology**  
 Sport specific equipment availability shapes sport availability. Transport and mobility between home, school and training becomes increasingly important.

**★ Performance Barrier**  
**Access to elite performance technology**  
 Equipment is specialised and highly customised to the athlete. Technology is costly but only required by a few.

Figure 3. Assistive technology barriers across the Para sport participation pathway.

This can obscure where barriers to participation begin. Across much of the continent, access challenges emerge far earlier in the pathway. At entry level, the priority is not elite technology, but access to assistive technology that is affordable, durable, appropriate for the context, and possible to maintain and repair locally. Without this, opportunities to participate in physical education, recreation, or early-stage sport remain limited.

As athletes progress, access to sport-specific equipment begins to shape which sports can realistically be played and sustained. At this stage, training environments, repair systems, transport, and mobility between home, school, and training become increasingly important. Progression depends not only on individual ability, but on the systems that support regular participation over time.

At the highest level of the pathway, equipment becomes more specialised and highly customised to the athlete and the demands of competition. This technology is costly, but required by only a relatively small number of athletes competing internationally. At this stage, differences in equipment quality, maintenance, and technical support can directly affect performance margins and international competition readiness.

## **9.0 PSAS as an Innovation Ecosystem Intervention**

Taken together, these developments support a reframing of PSAS as an innovation ecosystem intervention.

An innovation ecosystem in this context can be understood as the network of actors, resources, and systems required to enable the design, production, distribution, access, and sustained use of assistive technology for sport participation. This includes not only technical innovation, but also policy frameworks, market mechanisms, delivery systems, and forms of visibility that shape demand and engagement.

PSAS did not set out to build such a system directly. However, through its design and evolution, it has contributed to several of the conditions required for an ecosystem to emerge.

- First, it has played a role in agenda setting. By bringing assistive technology into visibility through storytelling, campaigns, and events, PSAS has helped to position it as a relevant and necessary component of participation. This has supported its inclusion in policy discussions, including at ministerial level.
- Second, it has contributed to demand generation. Exposure to equipment-based sports and technologies has created interest among athletes, coaches, and organisations. This demand was not previously visible, but becomes apparent when opportunities are introduced.
- Third, it has supported innovation mapping and amplification. By identifying and showcasing existing initiatives across the region, PSAS has helped to make a fragmented landscape more legible. This is a critical step in enabling coordination, as actors are better able to see where connections can be made.
- Fourth, it has enabled early coordination. Through convening spaces such as the Inter-Ministerial Forum and regional engagements, PSAS has created opportunities for actors to come together, share perspectives, and begin to explore collective approaches.

Finally, it has maintained a focus on participation pathways, ensuring that discussions of assistive technology remain grounded in access at community and youth levels, rather than being limited to elite performance.

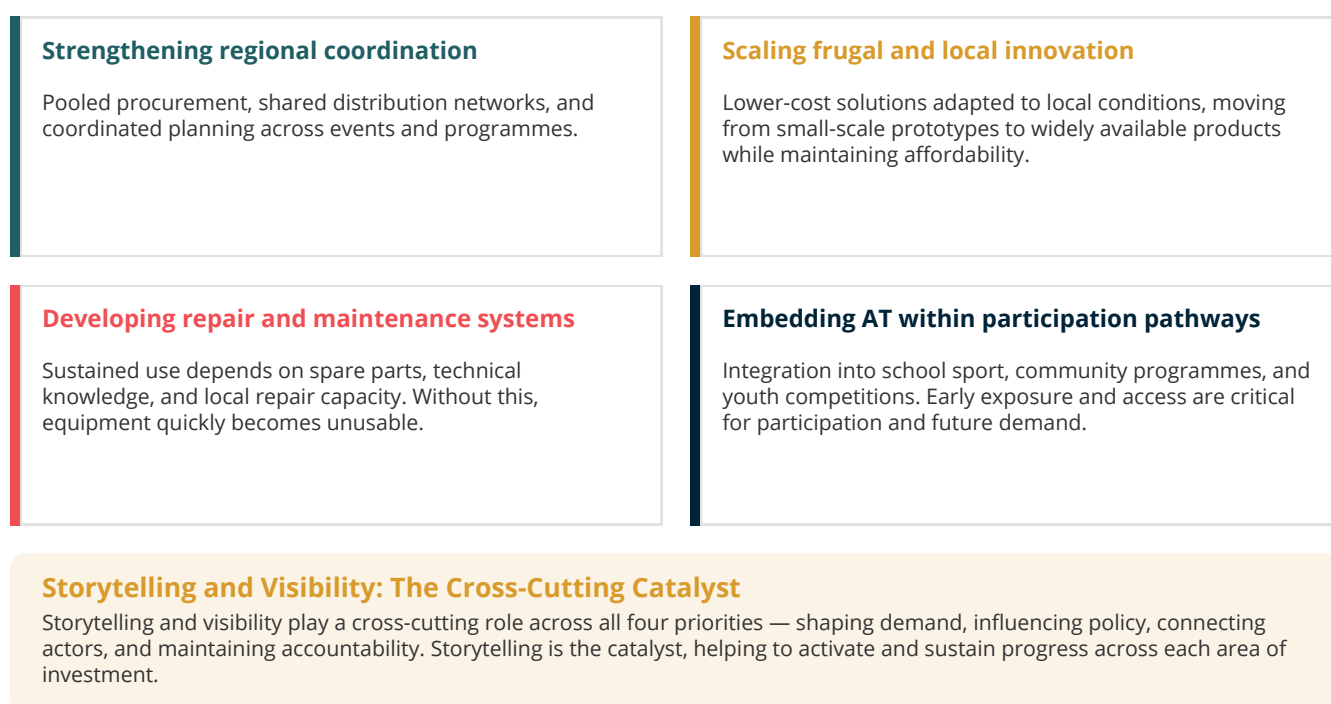
This combination of functions is characteristic of early-stage ecosystem development. Rather than delivering a single solution, the intervention works across multiple parts of the system, creating the conditions in which solutions can emerge and scale.

## 10.0 Implications for Investment and System Development

The experience of PSAS points to a set of priorities for future investment, particularly for funders, policymakers, and industry actors seeking to support the development of assistive technology ecosystems in sport.

These priorities reflect different parts of the system that must be strengthened in parallel. Together, they address how assistive technology is produced, accessed, sustained, and embedded within participation pathways.

### Investment Priorities for Building Assistive Technology Ecosystems in Sport



*Figure 4. Storytelling and visibility function as enabling processes across multiple areas of assistive technology ecosystem development in sport.*

Across all four priorities, storytelling and visibility play a cross-cutting role. Rather than functioning as standalone interventions, they act as enabling mechanisms within the system — shaping demand, influencing policy, connecting actors, and maintaining accountability. In this sense, storytelling operates as a catalyst, helping to activate and sustain progress across each area of investment.

## 11.0 Conclusion: From Visibility to System Building

PSAS began with a focus on visibility. Over time, it has contributed to something broader. It has helped to reveal the structural conditions that shape participation in Para sport, and the central role that assistive technology plays within these conditions.

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that visibility can act as a starting point, but it must be linked to wider system development in order to translate into meaningful change. This includes strengthening coordination, expanding access, and supporting innovation across multiple levels.

In Southern Africa, early signs of an assistive technology ecosystem for sport are beginning to emerge. These are not yet fully formed, and significant challenges remain. However, there is increasing alignment between actors, growing recognition at policy level, and a clearer understanding of the pathways required to expand participation.

The next phase of work will be defined by how these early signals are developed. This will require sustained investment, not only in individual initiatives, but in the connections between them. It will also require continued attention to participation, ensuring that efforts remain grounded in access at community and youth levels.

If visibility was the starting point, the task ahead is system building. The opportunity is to ensure that every moment of attention translates into access, participation, and sustained engagement with assistive technology in sport.



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